UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

LIVING THE SCHOOL'S VISION

by

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To all those, including my Mother and Father,
who had the vision for Christian Education
and also to those who,
in the practicalities of the classroom,
seek to live out their vision of Christian Education.

ABSTRACT

The case study methodology was used to explore how the vision of an independent Christian school influenced the practice of two teachers in the school and also to determine the relationship between the teacher's personal vision and that of the school. The vision of this school, as an independent Christian school, was the primary reason for the school's establishment and existence.

Participant observation occurred over three months in the classrooms of these two certified experienced teachers. Data collected included field notes, journal notes, transcriptions of interviews, documents, one teacher's journal, classroom artifacts and video tapes. Specific themes were elaborated in a narrative description of each teacher's practice. Themes common to both teachers were related to the school's mission statement.

The school's vision seemed to influence the teachers' practice by providing the freedom to operate from their world view, but also created an obligation to uphold the vision of the school. It established an atmosphere where the teachers felt privileged to teach in a way which was congruent with their world view. Although each teacher expressed the school's vision in her own way, the basis of the teacher's personal vision and the school's vision was a shared Christian world view.

Implications of this study indicate that a school's vision must be clearly articulated, conveyed to the community, celebrated, and lived. The nurturing of a spirit of trust and collegiality may promote honest sharing of teachers' lived experiences and a willingness to communally plan classroom activities which reflect the school's vision.

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Chapter I

BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

Introduction

"...In the book one thing that I coun't [*sic*] understand. Why they weren't aloulld [*sic*] going outside or playing with toys on Sunday" (A student writing).

The teacher's response to the students writing was:

> Dear ...
>
> Back in the pioneer days, almost everyone went to church. They were very conservative and strict about Sunday behavior. I think they had the wrong idea about Sundays. God made Sundays as a day to celebrate him. I can't think of a better way to do that than by going outside to play in his big beautiful world.

Another student wrote at the end of his reader's response journal entry:

> P. S. Read a goose bumps book. And you will see it's not bad. Please!
>
> From your best student, ...
>
> The teacher responded:
>
> Dear ...,
>
> You are right, I should read the book so that I know what they're about. The reason that we [the teachers] decided not to promote them at school is because they have a lot of violence and gore. They are written to scare readers, particularly kids. The teachers really felt that these things go against what Christ encourages us to be like. Jesus wanted us to look for the good and show people the goodness of God's creation. I don't think he ever meant for us to read and write about evil things and think it was just fine, because then when we have to choose between what's right and wrong and good and evil we might not be able to make

> a wise choice. The more information you get with terror and violence, the less able you are to make a good decision about it.
>
> Do you kind of understand what I mean?

The preceding are responses given by a teacher to two students who wrote about books they had read. She not only responded to the content of their writing, but also to their questions. In so doing, she shared what she and the other teachers at the school believed and also gave direction to the student's thinking. "Good teaching comes from the identity and integrity of the teacher" states Palmer (1998, p. 11). A good teacher possesses the capacity for connectedness which originates in the heart. In using the word "heart" he refers to it in the ancient sense, meaning the place where intellect and emotion and spirit converge in the human self. He continues by saying:

> the courage to teach is the courage to keep one's heart open to those very moments when the heart is asked to hold more than it is able so that teacher and students and subject can be woven into the fabric of the community that learning and living require. (p. 11)

In trying to get to the heart of school improvement, Sergiovanni (1992) encourages questions regarding the learning community and a school's shared covenant. What will the relationship be between parents, students and administrators and what shared values, purposes and commitments will bond the community? He sees the school covenant as the collective world view that is a complex and interlocking set of deeply held and cherished beliefs about the nature and structure of the universe and one's place in it. Aspects of it include: deep convictions about the nature and purpose of human existence; conceptions of knowledge, our capacity to acquire it, and the nature of human beings; best ways to structure human relationships; definitions of morality; deeply held conceptions of how schools work; the nature of human motivation, power and authority; how decisions are made; how students learn, grow and develop; and the nature of the process of schooling itself.

Reflecting on the previous ideas, I see teaching as a deeply religious experience which flows out of the heart and touches all aspects of life. I have always thought of this as my vision of education. Barna (1992) indicates that one's vision will reflect one's most basic value and beliefs. These elements are an inseparable part of you and become integrated into every judgment and decision made. They are also important because they serve as the filter through which one determines how to respond to each changing circumstance. He also says that "the vision of God imparted to a true leader invariably has but one goal: glorifying Him by building His Kingdom" (p. 72). In Proverbs 29: 18 (King James Version) we read "Where there is no vision the people perish". Edlin (1994) in *The Cause of Christian Education* sees this as a warning that if we are not decisively clear about what we believe and where we are going, we risk being diverted from our course. "As Christians we must have a clear concept of what we are involved in and where we are heading. We must realize the radical distinctiveness of our educational goal of challenging children to celebrate the Lordship of Christ over all of creation" (p. 74).

Personal Roots in Christian Education

My roots sink deep into the soil of Christian Education. Growing up in a farming community of Central Alberta, I had the privilege of attending the first non-Catholic Christian school founded in Alberta. It was the second of its kind in Canada. Upon obtaining my teaching degree I taught in the same type of Christian school; schools which are now member schools of an organization called Christian Schools International.

As I read through the book that members of our family wrote for my parents' fiftieth wedding anniversary, I realize that my roots are deeper in

Christian education than I had previously been aware. "For Dad, in particular, Christian education has always been part of his life. His dad was always involved in Christian education" (Siebenga, 1989, p. 54). Not long after the Dutch immigrants came to the Lacombe area in Central Alberta, they built a church. Soon that was followed by the establishment of a school society for the purpose of starting a Christian School. The July 26, 1944 constitution states:

> Our fundamental principles are; that our children are an [*sic*] heritage from the Lord; that therefore they must be trained for Him; that not the State but the parents are responsible for their Christian training; that all their training must be in harmony with the Word of God; and that such a training requires a separate Christian school. (Lacombe Christian School, 1995, p. 12)

My father and uncle were charter members of that school society. My oldest brother started school in 1946 when the school was in its second year of operation. Because the school society was operated by parents, our family was always involved in some way; whether by serving as board members, volunteering time to raise money, or helping to clean the school and outhouses during the summer.

My mother wrote:

> It [The Christian School] was not by any means ideal but it was a start to give the students a Christ-centered education so that they could learn to understand their relationship to God and the people around them and learn about God's creation and all of its greatness. (Lacombe Christian School, 1995, p. 25)

My parents felt that if we as children understood our relationship to God, to others, and to the creation, we would be better able to meet the challenges in life. Around the supper table, after having read the Bible story, we sometimes heard stories of Abraham Kuyper, the prime minister of Holland and of Groen van Prinsterer, a leader in the Christian Education movement in the Netherlands. Guillaume Groen van Prinsterer was a Christian historian, publicist, statesman, political leader and honorary chairman of the nation wide association called the Society for Christian National Education which was founded in the Netherlands in 1860 (Vanden Berg, 1978). My grandparents, growing up during the time of Abraham Kuyper, were familiar with the political dynamics in the Netherlands which gave rise to the Christian School movement. Even though the public school was next door to my grandparent's home, they made the decision, based on their Christian principles, that their children would attend the Christian school. My grandfather, working as a bakery delivery man, often conversed with the customers about politics. It was in riding along with his father, that my father gained an appreciation of the political issues of the day. It was there that he heard my grandfather talk of his support for the Christian school and of his reasons for that support (A. Siebenga, personal communication, September 18, 1998).

Abraham Kuyper believed that it did not make a difference whether you were a doctor, a farmer, a prime minister, a bricklayer, a house wife, or a student; whatever you did must be done to God's glory. In our family history book we wrote, "Dad realized that life was bigger than the church; that all of life is the Lord's" (Siebenga, 1989, p. 9). Although I did not recognize it then, my philosophy of life and of Christian education was being formed at a very young age.

I attended a Christian School from grade one through six and after high school entered a Christian College where I obtained my teaching degree. As I began to teach in a Christian school I always had the desire to learn more fully what it meant to teach from a Christian point of view.

The schools at which I taught had a statement of purpose, educational creed or a mission statement. As both a teacher and a principal, I referred to the statement to ensure that I and my colleagues were fulfilling the purpose for which the school was created. Parents who send their children to these schools do so with a reason, sacrificing financially, and expecting the school to live up to its statement of purpose. At the board table at our school system and at the district level, I often heard the question asked, "Are our teachers 'reformed' in their teaching?" That question related directly to the mission statement.

The Christian schools with which I am most familiar belong to an association called Christian Schools International. Formerly called National Union of Christian Schools, the association was established in 1920 in Grand Rapids, Michigan and served to help beginning Christian School societies in their establishment of a school. Many of these schools, usually at their inception, adopted a statement of purpose which included their statement of belief. Not only did the statement indicate that the Bible was the basis of the school, it also articulated the responsibilities of parents, staff, students and community (Christian Schools International, 1993; Edmonton Christian Schools, 1993). Those who support and operate the Christian schools do so because of their Christian world view. As Goheen (2000) states:

> worldview must be understood as more than a framework of propositions that articulate our fundamental beliefs; those religious commitments become embodied in the institutions, forms and practices of the culture... Worldview will always be concretely embodied in the institutions of a society. (p. 1)

In order to more fully understand the Christian Day Schools rooted in the Calvinist worldview, it is important to have a brief look at their history.

Historical Roots of Calvinist Christian Day Schools

Harro Van Brummelen in his book *Telling the Next Generation* (1986) traces the educational development of the North American Calvinist Christian Schools. On May 6, 1844 the first Christian school opened in Nijmegen, the Netherlands. It was governed by an independent association of parents, a pattern of organization which today characterizes most of the schools belonging to Christian Schools International. The "religio-philosophical system", Calvinism, which was founded by John Calvin in Geneva, Switzerland and spread across France, England, Scotland and The Netherlands not only affected the liturgical beliefs but also influenced the economics, politics and education in each of the countries (0ppewal & DeBoer, 1984). When The Netherlands was established as a kingdom (1815) under William I, the historic Calvinist creeds were recognized and Calvinism was in effect the state church. As time went on and leaders in the church and university interpreted the confessional creeds freely, Orthodox Calvinists (Seceders) protested the changes and eventually seceded from the state church in 1834. Because the Dutch school system, the state, and the church were intertwined, the Seceders objected not only to the church polity and doctrine, but to educational emphasis as well. One of the reasons for the Secession was the Seceders' conviction that the schools under the supervision of the state were becoming neutral in matters of religion. Their desire to establish their own church-controlled schools was frustrated by the state which eventually became one of the reasons for some of the Seceders immigrating to the United States under the leadership of Van Raalte and Brummelkamp (0ppewal & DeBoer).

For many years Groen von Prinsterer, continuing in The Netherlands, appealed to the national conscience for justice and fair play in elementary education. He was thankful when he found that Dr. Abraham Kuyper was ready to continue his political agenda. It was not until 1889 that the education law of the Netherlands recognized the equality of public and non-public schools before the law and granted subsidy in the form of modest financial aid to the non-public schools (Vanden Berg, 1978). "More than anyone else in modern times, Abraham Kuyper (1837-1920) put his stamp on Dutch Calvinism, including its North American Branch," writes Van Brummelen. "Preacher and theologian, philosopher and politician, newspaper writer and editor; as such Kuyper was the dominant and unrivaled thinker, organizer and communicator in Dutch society from about 1880 to early in the new century" (Van Brummelen, 1986, p. 77). During Kuyper's time as Prime minister, both chambers of Parliament adopted his elementary education bill which enacted progressive revision of the elementary school laws providing substantial subsidy increases to the non-public schools, pension system participation for all teachers and compulsory school attendance (Vanden Berg, 1978).

Prior to the 1880s, the Christian schools established by the Dutch immigrants in North America were operated to maintain Dutch Calvinism and were strictly controlled by the Christian Reformed Church. The immigrants from 1890 - 1920 had a different mind set. Their world-and-life-view was influenced by the thinking of Kuyper who encouraged them to become involved in American society, therefore they wanted Christian education which was relevant to American society, distinctively Christian in pedagogy and curriculum and taught by teachers who were qualified (Van Brummelen, 1986). As Vander Berg (1978) wrote:

> Dr. Kuyper was a Calvinist ... He knew that Calvinism is not only a religion but a comprehensive, all-inclusive *Weltanschauung* (life-and-world-view): the Scriptures serve not only to find justification by faith and to shed light of the Word on the path to eternity but also to point out

> the foundation for all of human life, the sacred ordinances which must govern the life of man in every sector and in all human relations if that life is to be sound and vigorous. (p. 255)

Because of the influence of Kuyper and the Christian School movement in the Netherlands, the schools in North America began to operate as separate school societies, independent of the church. This meant they were to be "directly accountable to God and were to implement a program that taught pupils to see and experience that Christ was King of every 'square inch' of the 'total expanse of human life'" (Van Brummelen, 1986, p. 115). Kuyper's view of Christianity and culture not only had a great impact on the Dutch Calvinist community, but also on its Christian schools. He, like Augustine and Calvin, took the view "that Christ, as King of all of life, is the transformer of culture in the sense that He redirects, reinvigorates, and regenerates a culture marred by personal and social sin" (Van Brummelen, p. 81).

With the increase in Dutch immigrants to North America, the number of Christian Reformed churches grew. The number of schools also increased, but to a lesser degree. When in 1892 the Synod of the Christian Reformed Church encouraged the organization of a national society to promote Christian education, the Society for Christian Education on a Reformed Basis was organized. One of its aims was to train young people to be "Reformed teachers" (0ppewal and DeBoer, 1984, p. 65). Although the desire was to separate the school from the church, for many years the membership practices gave the perception that the school was "an arm of the church and essential to her life" (0ppewal and DeBoer, p. 66). With a growing increase in the number of schools, groups of schools began working together and eventually the National Union of Christian Schools was born in 1920. What was significant for the Calvinist school movement was that the Union was a union of laymember school boards, not church officials. This citizen-and parent-controlled concept of day school education remains unique, even today, in that it is a system with religious orientation, but not administered or funded by any church denomination (0ppewal and DeBoer).

Although the schools belonging to the National Union of Christian Schools gained acceptance among the Christian Reformed Church members, and had improved in their educational quality, there did not appear to be a clear vision about educational philosophy and the direction of curriculum. Part of this was due to the fact that many of the school leaders had their roots in the Seceder movement, not the Kuyperian movement. Those with origins in the Seceder movement saw education as important for economic advancement and for the inculcation of traditional Calvinist doctrines and values. They did not have a leadership who could define the philosophical and pedagogical direction of the schools (Van Brummelen, 1986).

In the *Christian Home and School,* Richard Postman, president in 1947 of the National Union of Christian Schools, called for a distinctive Christian School philosophy, objectives, methodology and curriculum policies through "daring experimentation and bold pioneering" (Van Brummelen, 1986, p. 171). Christian educators of the 1950s such as Jellema and Zylstra saw schooling as the cultivation of student's intellect, whereas Cornelius Jaarsma, head of Calvin College's secondary education program, embraced some of the ideas of the progressive educators. Writing in the Calvin Forum of Dec., 1955, Jaarsma encouraged teachers to structure learning activities so that students would come face to face with God's claim on their lives (Van Brummelen, 1986).

Nicholas Wolterstorff, addressed the 1966 Christian Schools International Convention, on the topic entitled *Curriculum, By What Standard?* He challenged educators not only to teach for a life of faith coming to expression as a life of Christian discipleship in contemporary society, but to be knowledgeable of that society's roots, values, aims, ideals, and allegiances. He also encouraged educators to consider the consequences on curriculum and pedagogy if emphasis were placed on creativity by both the student and the teacher (Wolterstorff, 1966). Beversluis, building on Wolterstorff's original work, stated in his *Philosophy of Christian Education* that the religious vision ought to be more than a preamble to Christian education. It should come to expression in the program in areas such as overall curriculum pattern, courses of study, the teaching-learning process and choice of its major learning goals (Beversluis, 1971). Materials published by Christian Schools International (CSI), including the Bible curriculum and the Junior high social studies curriculum, *The Story of The Old World*, were attempts to incorporate these ideas.

During the mid-sixties Canadian Christian school leaders, including some children of the Dutch immigrants who had started the first Christian schools, began to discuss the implication of philosophical and religious direction on the curriculum of the schools. Through Calvin College philosophy professor Evan Runner, they were strongly influenced by the Kuyperian philosophical thought of Herman Dooyeweerd and desired a curriculum which would "establish and develop a Christian view of human beings, their environment and their task in life" (Van Brummelen, 1986, p. 188 -189). Together they began to write curriculum units for use in their own classrooms which dealt with curriculum topics from a Christian perspective. Teachers such as Witvoet, in reflecting on his teaching at that time stated, "The Christian school, I argued, has to help students discern the spirits of their time and teach them to survive" (Witvoet, 1999, p. 16). Referring to another teacher (anonymous) Witvoet indicated, "When he started some 35 years ago, he was strongly motivated by the principle that we are called to bring all thoughts into captivity to Christ" (p. 4). *Joy In Learning (1973)*, a curriculum developed by the Curriculum Development Centre in Toronto, provided teachers with a valuable teaching guide, which as co-author Arnold De Graaff intended, was to prepare children for "unfolding and developing" the world "for the benefit of all people" (De Graaff & Olthius, 1973, p. 5). "God's Word as it holds and directs creation provides us with a vision of life which can truly direct us in our daily activities (De Graaff & Olthius, p. 7). Also based on Dooyeweerd's philosophy, these common life tasks or daily activities were described as:

> Each person is called to take up his responsibilities within the fellowship of believers. Each person hopes to be married, start a new family and raise children, All persons are called to take up their responsibilities as citizens of a particular nation. Every person is called to engage in some kind of work and to make decisions with regard to the use of resources and possessions. All are confronted by different art forms. All bear responsibilities with regard to recreation. All are neighbors to someone and establish many inter-personal relationships. Everyone is called to seek and further emotional health. Everyone ought to seek physical well-being and care for the sick and aged. All people bear responsibility for the physical environment and planning of cities. There, in these areas of life, God wants us to experience his salvation, for He redeems the total person in all his relationships and activities. (De Graaff & Olthius, p. 6)

These activity based units, complete with introduction and main theme, served as a basis for many of the curriculum units written by Christian elementary teachers in the following years. In the late seventies and eighties the Curriculum Development Center also made available a consultant, who in working with the teacher(s), provided on-sight advice about how to implement curricular and pedagogical changes. At this time a group of teachers from CSI District 11 (which includes Alberta), started meeting together on a regular basis to coordinate the writing of curriculum units. This body eventually became the CSI Curriculum Advisory Committee, a committee on which I served for many years. By the mid eighties there were 114 CSI schools across Canada (Christian Schools International, 1984). Three district offices were established with a curriculum coordinator serving the schools in each of the districts. Through the curriculum coordinator, curriculum writing by classroom teachers was encouraged and facilitated, not only in the district, but also across Canada, so that the materials produced could be used or adapted by any teacher in the Christian Schools. Summer courses and workshops, dealing with the Christian Philosophy of Education as well as curriculum writing, were funded by the local school boards and the district offices. In recent years classroom teachers were also seconded during the school year to write curriculum materials, from a Christian perspective, which were then made available to each Christian School in the district as well as to the other CSI Canadian curriculum offices.

Oppewal and DeBoer (1984) indicate that during these years the schools remained grounded in the "biblical/theological principles as seen from the Calvinist perspective" which came to expression in three interrelated educational positions:

> the locus of the educational authority resides not with the church or the state but with the family, the proper relation between education and religion is not that of neutrality towards all, nor simple indoctrination in one, but the integration of a religious world-view into all curriculum content, and lastly that the aim of such education is neither evangelization nor neutral-free information giving, but preparing the learner for living a Christian lifestyle in contemporary society. (p. 73 -74)

DeMoor (1994) stated that the task of the Christian school was:

> to educate children for their lives of service in the Kingdom of God in its entirety - not, primarily as citizens of the state or as members of a church. Calvinist Christian schools teach students: (1) towards an individual commitment to Christ, (2) towards an understanding of their task within the communal Body of Christ, (3) towards an understanding of their task to promote justice and healing for others, and (4) towards enabling students to participate in transformation of social structures, the lives of their neighbors as well as of their own lives. (p. 65 - 66)

It is the desire of parents, board members and educators to reflect this in the administration, teaching, and curriculum materials of the CSI Christian schools.

Focus of the Study

Stronks and Blomberg, authors of *A Vision with a Task* (1993), refer to Christian education as schooling "guided by a vision of a new and better world: the kingdom of God" (p. 18). More recently Dr. Albert Greene, a man who has been working in or with Christian schools for over forty years, wrote a book, *Reforming the Future of Christian Education: A Transforming Vision.* He calls his book "a call to prayer and a deeper understanding of what it means to teach Christianly" (Greene, 1998, viii). Returning to the earlier question, "Are our teachers 'reformed' in their teaching?", those who are members of the Christian School Society understand this to mean, "Are they operating out of a Calvinist Christian world view, or the particular vision of Christian education on which these schools were founded?" As I taught summer courses and led workshops in Christian schools, one topic inevitably was on the agenda for study and discussion, "How do we teach Christianly?" Again this question relates to the vision and mission of these schools.

I, along with fellow Christian educators, continually struggle with what it means to teach Christianly and also sense the need to retain the vision of Christian Education. It is out of this tension that the significance of Barth's (1990) series of questions struck me. He asked:

> Why worry about vision? What are the advantages for teachers and principals of being in touch with visions? What do students gain when adults with whom they work are visionaries? What are the disadvantages of holding and sharing a vision? What is the relationship between personal vision and collective vision? Where do visions come from and how can they be developed? How can one person be a part of another person's vision? How is vision translated into practice? (p. 154)

All of these questions were important for Christian education. These were some of the questions my colleagues and I had been discussing long before the notion of vision and mission statements began to emerge in the field of education in general.

The fact that Barth was asking these questions meant that they were important for the whole area of education. The importance of a vision for an organization or business has become dominant in recent years. Through the school reform movement vision and mission statements have also gained prominence in schools. The importance of the collective vision statement and the formulation of a vision statement giving direction to school has been stressed. Studies have focused on the process of setting a vision and on the principal's role in vision setting. To this point, very few studies, if any have focused on the teacher in relation to vision. Of all of Barth's questions, the most important one for this study is, "How is vision translated into practice?" I am not aware of any studies in the area of Christian education which focus on the teacher's practice as it relates to the vision of the school.

Situating this study within a Christian school setting, the purpose of this study was to explore:

1. How does the vision of the school influence the practice of the teacher?
2. What is the relationship between the personal vision of the teacher and the collective vision of the school?

These questions were explored in the context of a case study of two teachers teaching in elementary classrooms in an independent school operating out of a Christian world view. The school was located in a large urban center.

Significance

This Christian school has a history of over fifty years. Vision has always been at the forefront of the school because without this vision, there would be no reason for the school's existence. Vision has been the topic of keynote addresses at conventions for teachers within the Christian School districts of Western Canada for the last three years, and also at the principals and administrators conference of Christian Schools International in 1998. The Christian schools continue to focus on the importance of vision, albeit their reason for the focus may be different than that of other schools for whom the business model and current government requirements may have had a greater impact.

Given the length of time that Christian education has had vision as a focus, compared to the more recent development in schools in general, there are lessons which can be learned from this study - for Christian education, but also education in general. In recent years a number of Christian Schools have become part of the Public school jurisdictions. These jurisdictions have also welcomed other schools which operate out of a particular vision or world view. In order to remain faithful to their particular vision of education, those in leadership roles in these schools, may have to consider how their practice reflects the vision of their particular school. As indicated, Roland Barth (1990) raised several questions about vision. He indicated that "exploration of these questions offer rich possibilities for researchers, consultants, academics, and school leaders who would contribute to this unusual route toward school reform" (p. 154). Insight will be gained and further questions will arise from this study which will also affect education in general. For example, what influence would a mission statement have on the teaching practice and what would be the relationship between the teacher's personal vision and the collective vision of the school when the research is conducted in a school where commonality of vision is not anticipated? What would be the results if these same research questions were asked in well established alternative schools (within or outside the public system), charter schools, Waldorf schools or Montessori schools? How is the vision of a Christian school or any other alternative school maintained when the school becomes part of the public school jurisdiction?

Summary

This chapter has shown that the study has risen from my experience in Christian education as it is carried out in Christian day schools. This experience has roots in familial history as well as in institutional history. These schools were established to operate out of a Calvinist Christian world and life view and it is this perspective that parents and school board members wish to maintain. The case study, conducted in one of the schools which shares this vision, was to explore the relationship between the practice in the classroom and the vision of the school. The study has significance for both Christian education and education in general. The next chapter will focus on the literature regarding world view and it influence on vision, as well as the increasing emphasis on vision in both business and education.

Chapter II

LEARNING FROM THE LITERATURE

Introduction

This chapter begins with a discussion of world view. One's world view impacts one's vision of life, thereby having an influence on the practicality of our lives. Literature related to establishment of a vision in business and schools will be examined, as will literature related to the implementation of the school's vision and its' influence in the school setting.

World view

Everyone of us has a world view or a perspective on life. It helps us interpret our life and the world around us. It influences how we live our lives. It can be thought of as a set of beliefs and assumptions about life and reality or a comprehensive framework of basic convictions about life. World views are usually described by addressing what we believe about the nature and purpose of reality, of human beings, of knowledge, and of life in society (Van Brummelen, 1994). Our world view determines our values, sorting out what is important from what is not; what is of highest value from that which is the least. Bavinck (1980) likens our world view to our deepest convictions which he says:

> are not a product of understanding or of the will. These beliefs are located deeper, in the depths of the soul, in the heart. They are part of man himself: they are, as it were, part of his essence: they *are* him, as he was born, raised and molded in a particular environment. (p. 23)

Our world view or *Weltanschauung* influences what we see, much like "a tint to the lenses" that colors everything at which we look. These perceptual glasses shape our perspective of reality (Groome, 1998; McCarthy, Oppewal, Peterson and Spykman, 1981). Although many of us may not be aware of our world views, all interpreters bring certain pre-understandings of reality to bear upon their work. No one perceives reality in a perceptual vacuum. As social theorists, Berger and Luckmann (1966) contend, all knowledge of reality is socially constructed in everyday life. The language, interaction with others, present knowledge base and our interaction with it, as well as its' distribution, all form our taken-for-granted reality. Ravn (1991) makes reference to this when he says, "the world is essentially a unity which, when observed or perceived from different perspectives, also appears different to us. Each perspective yields a view of the *same* world, but a *different* view" (p. 98).

Social theories are always constructed along the lines of certain confessional visions of life, shaped by hermeneutic principles and methods. (McCarthy et al, 1981, p. 149). Walsh and Middleton (1984) also see scholarship undergirded by a philosophical stance. Referring to the philosophical work of Dooyeweerd they state that every academic discipline presupposes a theoretic view of reality, including the idea of the mutual relation and interconnection which exists among the various aspects; an idea which in turn, is intrinsically dominated by a central religious motive.

The social theorist, Goudzwaard (1975), clarifies the confessional responses that take on concrete shape in the way people structure their societies by discussion of three basic biblical rules which together "explain man's relation to God and to his theoretical and practical pursuits":

> The first basic rule is that every man is serving god(s) in his life. This rule is known as Augustine's law of concentration.... The second rule is that every man is transformed into an image of his god. The choice of a god, of a real resting point in our lives, is not without consequences.... The third basic rule is that mankind creates and forms a structure of society in his own image. In the development of human civilization man forms, creates, and changes the structure of his society, and in doing so

> he portrays in his work the intention of his own heart. He gives to the structure of that society something of his own image and likeness. (p. 14 -15)

Walsh and Middleton (1984) explain that world views are not to be confused with philosophical systems even though both are views of the totality of reality. World views are foundational to such systems. Just as all scholarship presupposes a philosophical paradigm, so all philosophical paradigms presuppose a religious world view of one kind or another. Quoting Arthur Holmes they say, "to think 'Christianly' is to think 'world viewishly'. Only in this way can one's Christian faith function 'internally to' scholarship, as opposed to being dualistically added 'on top of scholarship'" (p. 171-172).

World view and School Reform

World views always have a communal dimension. Just like culture they do not belong to just one individual, but are formed within the context of like-minded people. Those who have studied in the area of school reform at times refer to a world view or to the aspects which comprise a world view. Stevenson (1998), in studying the educational systems of three different countries, concluded that the systems were embedded within the cultures of each country. One cannot hope for improvement without understanding the actions, beliefs, and attitudes related to education that exist within the culture. Formal education is both the parent and child of culture; they both shape and reflect each other (Purple, 1989). Sergiovanni (1992) in his work on school reform referred to school covenants indicating that they were based on a collective world view which had as its elements: a deep conviction about the nature and purposes of human existence; conceptions of knowledge and our capacity to acquire it; the nature of human beings; the best ways to structure human relationships, and definitions of morality. Dottin (1994) appealed to teacher education institutions to call on educational philosophers to help them address their world views when the institutions delineated a stated philosophy. He indicates that educational aims are usually developed around a set of abstract beliefs, propositions, and assumptions having to do with the nature of human beings and of society, with what constitutes a good life, how individuals relate to the ultimate reality, and with the purpose of life. We must be willing to clarify the questions that are rooted "not in the existing arsenal of educational establishment, but in the most vital concerns of the culture's and individual's search for meaning" states Purple (1989, p. 23). Noddings and Shore (1984) believe that the lack of clearly stated beliefs and goals is one of the root causes of decay in public education. Because of the rise and recognition of many competing publics, there is an avoidance of questions of great human importance and therefore many people see the only solution being the promotion of private schools, schools that can be frankly and fully open in their commitment to stated values.

Earlier, Lortie (1973), indicated that what was needed in the area of school reform was research on the world view of teachers and their approaches so that researchers could come to terms with "the value hierarchies of teachers" (p. 490). Glazer (1999) contended that:

> public and higher education have drawn bold lines between the world we experience and share, and the sacred. As a result, the ground of learning -the foundation of our worldview - has become one in which the world is flat.... Our worldview has been deflated to the point at which all that remains for us is the knowledge of surfaces, and belief in the material. (p. 9)

Becoming aware of the pain of disconnection in the area of education, Palmer (1983) encouraged the grasping of "the opportunity to revision education as a communal enterprise from the foundation up - in our images of reality, in our modes of knowing, in our ways of teaching and learning" (p. xix). In his subsequent work, he challenged teachers "to make the fundamental decision to act and to speak on the outside in ways consonant with the truth we know on the inside" (Palmer, 1999, p. 32).

Definitions

Many schools, whether public, separate or independent, adhere to a mission statement which grows out of a vision created by administration, teachers, parents, boards or a combination of some or all the components of the school community. In some schools it can be found clearly posted at the school entrance while in others it may be tucked away in a policy manual. Groups of parents who wish to start a charter school must define for themselves their purpose as one component in applying to the government for charter school status. Prior to a meeting of two hundred and fifty people invited to discuss anticipated "learning outcomes" of students, Dunnigan of the Edmonton Catholic board indicated, "We need to get beyond knowledge. We want to focus on our beliefs as we look at learning outcomes" (Mauthe, 1996).

Alberta Education included both the "Mission and Mandate" as well as "Vision and Beliefs" as part of the requirements of the 1995/96 School Board Interim Education plans (Alberta Education, 1995, p. 7). They chose to define "Mission and Mandate" as a clear concise statement of the jurisdiction's educational purpose with a focus on students; a statement of the school board's responsibility flowing from the Alberta School Act and the Goals of Schooling. On the other hand "Vision and Beliefs" were considered to be a belief statement that incorporated the values of the school system; a description of the fundamental character of education desired in 3 to 5 years (Alberta Education, 1995, p. 7).

More recently, vision, mission and principles and/or belief statements were all included in the "Foundation Statements" section of the Education Plan (Alberta Learning, 2001). Vision focused on student achievements and looked to the future, whereas mission continued to be defined as previously; as a clear and concise description of the school's overall purpose and role. Alberta Learning established their own "Principles and Belief" statement and in addition encouraged the private schools to include their principles and belief statements which "guide decision-making and provide a foundation for developing its mission, vision and goals" (p. 4 - 5).

The terms "mission" and "vision" are often used interchangeably. At times other phrases are used to speak of the same concept. Sergiovanni (1990) indicates that the key to a successful school is building "a covenant comprising purposes and beliefs that bonds people together around common themes and that provides a sense of what is important" (p. 20).

Stronks and Blomberg (1993) adopted Hollaar's map analogy of a vision statement and indicate the impact it can have on the operation of the school:

> One must check the map regularly to see if one is still on course or to see if the map is still current, supported by the latest reliable information. This map provides direction and informs the development of curriculum materials such as course and unit outlines. It implies pedagogy, the how of teaching. It suggests ways of evaluating classroom and school practices and policies. It suggests appropriate governance models and practices. It suggests appropriate leadership styles. (p. 71)

Stronks and Blomberg believe that a mission statement encapsulates the core of that vision in two or three key points. The statement describes what the parents and teachers of that school community believe about learning and teaching. It also indicates what the students will experience in the school and why they will have those experiences. The mission statement determines what kind of community and environment will be established in that school and the reasons for its' establishment (Stronks and Blomberg, 1993).

Sowell agreed that vision is like a map that guides us through a tangle of complexities, leaving out concrete features which allow us to focus on our goals (Sowell, 1987). Shamrock, however, prefers to view it more as a compass that points the direction to be taken, that inspires enthusiasm and that will allow people to buy into and take part in shaping of the school's mission (Sergiovanni, 1990).

For the purpose of this study "vision" is defined as a set of belief statements which allow a person or organization to focus on a goal. It allows them to say, "because we believe 'this', we want to achieve 'this' ". It allows the organization or the person to move from "the here and now" to the "what might be".

Vision Statements: From Business to Education

In recent years vision has given direction in the area of business. Peters and Waterman's (1982) book *In Search of Excellence* related research on what they considered "excellent" companies. They concluded that one element which contributed to their success was to "figure out your value system" and "decide what your company *stands* for" (p. 279). De Pree in *Leadership Jazz* (1992) states that the organization expects the leader "to define and express both in writing, and especially through behavior, the beliefs and values of the institution"(p. 26) and "be responsible for lean and simple statements of policy consistent with beliefs and values, vision and strategy" (p. 27). Bennis (1990) believed leaders, functioning as conceptualists, must create for their institutions clear-cut and measurable goals based on advice from all elements of the community. He contends that the increasing tension between individual rights and the common good of society discourages the emergence of leaders because "the narcissistic children of the Me Decade seem unwilling to embrace any vision but their own..." He continued, "People float, but they don't dream. And people without a dream are less easily inspired by a leader's dream." (p. xii). He believed, however that change is possible as one by one individuals make a conscious choice to live up to their potential, and that people of virtue and vision can lead us "back to high ground" (p. 27).

Nanus (1992) in *Visionary Leadership* sees vision as a signpost pointing the way for all who need to understand what the organization is and where it intends to go. A vision has no power to inspire people and no ability to set a new standard or attract commitment unless it offers a view of the future that is clearly better for the organization, for its people, and for the society within which the organization operates. The leader is seen as a coach whose main purpose is to empower people to act in the name of the new vision and to help sustain their commitment to it. The team context, which the leader initiates, provides material and emotional support for individuals, thus defining the meaning and value of their individual work. Nanus believes that most people find fulfillment in working with others for a worthwhile cause which the vision provides and which the context supports. He, referring to the earlier work done in conjunction with Bennis, indicated that the leader "may be the one who articulates the vision and gives it legitimacy, who expresses the vision in captivating rhetoric that fires imagination and emotions of followers, who through vision, empowers others to make the decisions that get things done" (p. 36). The vision, however, must grow out of the needs of the entire organization and must be "claimed or owned" by all the important actors if the organization is to be successful (p. 36).

A recent library search indicated that the majority of literature regarding mission statements focuses on the area of business. Some however, dealt with mission statements of health institutions, libraries and institutions of higher education. To a lesser degree vision has also found its way into the area of education from elementary to high school. Sybouts (1992), indicated that Cook took the Program Evaluation and Review Technique (PERT) concept from the space effort and applied it to education. Space engineers used PERT to help manage large projects in which there were thousands of tasks to perform. The PERT network began by developing a clear definition of what mission was to be accomplished. The total project was conceptualized, and the various parts defined. Once there was clear agreement on what was to be accomplished, that total concept was broken into its major mission functions.

According to Murphy the current school reform effort in the United States began with the 1983 document *The Nation at Risk* (Chance, 1994). In April, 1994, President Clinton, building on the work of President Bush, signed into law Goal 2000: Educate America Act (Jennings, 1995). Goal 2000 was a vision statement of the American nation which was broken down into measurable goals in much the same manner as the PERT project (Smiling, 1995). In order to qualify for the US federal school reform funds (seed money), local districts were expected to appoint a panel consisting of administrators, teachers, business leaders and parents to create a framework or vision for establishing high academic and skill standards (Belair, 1995). Thus, politically mandated reform became the predominant approach to educational reform (Chance, 1994).

Desimone (2000) in reviewing school reform, identified three waves of the reform movement. The first, which questioned the basic structure of schools, called for systemic changes such as increasing standards and regulations. The second was focused on deepening the relationship between the schools and families, addressing the needs of special groups of students, and obtaining and retaining effective teachers. The third wave focused on schools with distinctive purposes and common expectations. Characteristics associated with effective schools included shared goals, strong leadership and positive school climate. "Charter schools, magnet schools, new small schools, redesigned traditional schools, and comprehensive schoolwide reform models are all attempts to respond to this level of reform, as well as to overcome the problems inherent in the traditional bureaucratic structure and to create smaller organizations with a coherent vision" (p. 2). A school's vision comes to expression in various ways.

Expressions of Vision

> A school without a vision is a vacuum inviting intrusion. A school that proclaims its own vision achieves and deserves some measure of what they call diplomatic immunity in Washington. (Barth, 1990, p. 152)

Researchers such as Barth (1990, 2001), Sergiovanni (1990, 1992), Newton and Newton (1992), Stronks and Blomberg(1993), Glazer (1993) and Lashway (1997) all concur that the establishment of a shared set of values for the school by the parents, teachers and administrators will lead to greater effectiveness in the educational endeavor. Eisner (1995) believes that real educational reform is not about shallow efforts, but about vision, conversation and action designed to create "a genuine and evolving educational culture" (p. 764). Vision has the power to focus the talents and energies of all concerned in moving in the directions upon which all agreed. Newton and Newton (1992) and Barth (2001) believed that personal vision is the first step towards building a shared articulated vision for the system. Vision starts from within and is something about which we care deeply . Those in leadership positions need to be able to see how things could be better, articulate the aspects that they care about the most when they imagine how things could be better, and think about what personal investment they are willing to make.

Barth (1990) in his book *Improving Schools from Within* refers to the school practitioner's vision as a personal vision. It is "one's overall conception of what the educator wants the organization to stand for: a sense of how all the parts fit together: and above all how the vision maker fits into the grand plan" (p. 148). He also indicates that researchers such as Lipsitz, Blumberg and Greenfield found a consistent relationship between the presence of teachers' and principals' visions and the effectiveness of their schools. He cites Lipsitz as saying, "Extracting effective school practices from one setting and replicating them elsewhere may make a bad school mediocre. To become a good school requires a change in vision from within" (p. 151).

Importance of Shared Vision

Shanker (1995), in reflecting on twelve studies of education reform concluded that the common lesson in almost all of the studies was the absolute necessity of a shared vision - a common understanding of what students were expected to know and be able to do as a result of their education, and secondly, a common commitment by all parts of the system to "discharge their perspective functions in accordance with their mission" (p. 82). Rossi and Stringfield (1995), noted that teachers' sharing of a vision and sense of purpose was associated with effective programs within schools. Students felt cared about and respected. As in previous studies, they identified shared vision, a shared sense of purpose, and shared values among the ten elements which were foundational for excellence in schools. Fullan and Hargreaves (1991) stated that schools characterized by collaborative cultures are also places of hard work, of strong and common commitment, dedication, of collective responsibility, and of a special sense of pride in the institution. The examination of the values and purposes of the school is not a one time event, as when a staff participates in writing a mission statement, but a continuous process that pervades the whole school.

Using the Edmonton public school system as an example, Brandt (2001) believes districts should offers a variety of programs based on their conceptual strength and effectiveness. He states that for the system to work, "schools need to be staffed by teachers and principals whose values and professional skills are in tune with the programs they offer" and that "the school's primary accountability should be to the parents who have chosen it on the basis of its particular purposes" (p. 156).

The Process of Vision Setting

Some studies reported the process of vision setting. McDonough and Noonan (1994) describe the two year process the Saskatoon Catholic School Board embraced to come up with a vision statement. This process involved consultation, interpretation of survey results, formation of a vision statement, and an implementation stage in which staff members were encouraged to become familiar with the statement. Although school staffs used the mission statement as a basis to develop school policies and programs, the authors conclude that ways must be found so that a mission statement is more *mission* than *statement*. Barrett and McNamara (1994) on the other hand, describe how a Catholic school system in Australia implemented a process to ensure and enhance the quality of education, recognizing that the same purposes and set of enduring beliefs and values gave direction to the system as they did when the system began twenty years earlier.

Chance (1994) chronicled the process which two school districts in Texas and Oklahoma went through involving the community in vision setting. Building on the work of Sergiovanni, Chance asserts that visionary leaders have a "strong commitment to the achievement of organizational goals while being organizational innovators who develop a common sense of purpose among constituents" (p. 4). Through the case studies he explained how two school districts identified a shared vision by using a five step process which included: develop a personal vision by school district leaders, develop an overall organizational vision through community involvement, determine how to communicate the vision, determine how to actualize the vision, and determine how to sustain the vision process. The positive responses from both the parents and teachers indicated the success of the process in that the vision provided a sense of direction and allowed the school community partnership to exist in words and actions. Whether the vision was actually achieved was not yet determined by the time the study concluded.

Newton and Newton (1992), in *Voices, Vision and Vitality: Redesigning Small Schools* indicated the importance of the mission statement as they related their work with rural schools in Western Canada and the Dakotas. Unlike some other models, which begin with vision, their planning cycle began with the mission statement, leading into vision, system goals and on to implementation strategies by areas of responsibility. Their work serves as a guide for schools and school districts going through the process of setting a vision and writing a mission statement; a process which involved the whole school community.

Stronks and Blomberg (1993) describe in detail the process of discussion on the part of educators, parents and board members, which some Christian schools have used to "get from vision to mission". They say, "Every teacher and student must know the purpose of the school and it is the task of the principal to keep that purpose constantly before them" (p. 86).

Lashway (1997), in reviewing some of the studies which dealt with vision, indicated that although educators do not have patience for extended discussions of philosophy, both talk and action are necessary. He referred to a study by Wincek which described a school where vision faltered because of little discussion.

The school reform movement in the United States mandated that every school was to have a vision or mission statement. Barth (2001), however, believes that the process by which a school comes to have a vision, is inadequate. Through his study he found that schools report many paths toward a school vision. They may include inheriting a vision, refining a vision, borrowing a vision, buying a vision, inflicting a vision, hiring a vision, homogenizing a vision or growing a vision (p. 198 - 208). Although growing a vision may be the most difficult route, it is also the most promising in that it yields the richest vision and the most changes in practice. Vision "must come from within each educator and from within each school community" (p. 208).

Allen (2001) commenting that although educators such as Fullan, Barnett and Whitaker, Levin, and Newmann, Secada and Wehlage, all prize the importance of a school's vision statement, reported that many schools ignore them. Recognizing reasons why this was so, he made a number of recommendations to "breathe life" into the guiding beliefs (p. 289). The recommendations were: 1.) Schools examine their guiding statements sentence by sentence and word by word, 2.) The guiding statements lead to action if they address the specific teaching and learning experiences that help students realize the purpose and results found in the statement. 3.) Schools engage in ongoing dialogue that deepens the understanding of the school's statement. 4.) All aspects of the school's operation are aligned with the statements. 5.) Effective principals are strong advocates of the guiding beliefs of the school. 6.) The school must implement a plan to determine the understanding and evaluate the use of the guiding statements (p. 291 - 292).

Impact of Vision on Programs

Concern for the future of their schools has caused some school districts and educators to evaluate the impact that their vision or statement of purpose has on their programs. The Archdiocese of St. Louis, after studying their directional statements, challenged the Catholic community to radically commit to Catholic schools, to address the diversity of curriculum, the diversity in composition of the student body, and to design alternative models to address the changing educational needs (Governal, 1993). Miserandino (1994), indicating the need to address the effects of racism, prejudice and bigotry on the non-white student population, believed that the principal is the key agent of change. He stated, "School leadership which enhances racial understanding and shared vision for social integration must be a moral commitment at the center of every school leader or else such a goal will be pushed aside in light of other pressing issues" (p. 5).

After a number of years of operation, the National Middle School Association saw a need for re-evaluation. In *This We Believe; Developmentally Responsive Middle Level Schools*, a shared vision is the second of six characteristics deemed essential for effective education at a middle school. They saw the importance of educators possessing a vision that was "'idealistic and uplifting'" reflecting the very best about student achievement, student-teacher relationships and community participation (Loundbury, 1996). Another national association which saw the need for a common vision was the National Science Teachers Association. Evaluating the results of the United States students in comparison to others who participated in the Third International Mathematics and Science Study, the association was pleased that the resulting curriculum study stressed the need for a common vision of science education. That vision now exists as part of the National Science Education Standards (McCann, 1998).

In recent years, the emphasis has been on the integration of the institution's vision and its programs. Debate on how to pursue excellence in vocational teacher education programs focused on vocational education's mission, audience, and delivery. A proposed model of the program included assessment, curriculum framework, standards of knowledge and practice, principles of vocational and technical teaching, and the philosophical foundations (Naylor, 1997). Assessment practices for students who are learning English as a second language was the focus of work done by Gomez (2000). She recognized that many English language learners were denied educational opportunities based on assessment results because students who were learning English as a second language were often excluded from the traditional assessment practices of many states and school districts. Developing and implementing a large-scale assessment portfolio program that included English language learners, required a common vision by the school system. School systems help create a shared vision of the purpose of education based on the values of the community. They clearly articulated expectations and the criteria upon which to assess attainment of these expectations based on the vision. It delineated what students should learn and be able to do, how goals would be assessed, and what criteria would be utilized. Short (2000), working with Gomez, reported that Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL) articulated a vision of effective education for English language learners. The conceptual framework formulated standards for their students and demanded that these students have access to all services such as gifted and talented courses (Short, 2000).

The Summer Bridge Programs as described by Kezar (2000) also focused on non-English speaking students, international students or students who are disabled. The programs main focus was to retain these populations as they entered higher education. Some characteristics of model programs are that they are individualized, had strong faculty support and involvement, had partnerships with area K-12 schools and were tied to the institution's mission. It was recommended that each new program begin by developing a mission statement and goals as they were essential to the evaluation of the program.

Met (2000) focused on how foreign languages were to be taught at the middle school level. Holding to the philosophy that the middle school is a unique entity with a mission of its own, Met reported a need for renewed vision for the program. Foreign language teachers should be included as part of the interdisciplinary curriculum planning teams to insure consistency of the philosophy, organization and instructional underpinnings of the middle school. Slowinski (2000) examined the effective integration of technology into schools and explored the importance that technology had for school leaders. This included the development a school vision statement by engaging school board members, faculty and staff members, students and community members in a process of articulating a shared vision of the future of the school. The impact that technology had on the achievement the school's objectives was determined by analyzing the gap between the current and the anticipated learning outcomes. Continual evaluation of the progress toward the vision, and the reformulation of the action plan were put in place. Teachers were encouraged to take advantage of on-line professional networks. As a result of this articulated vision, Slowinski believed a longitudinal plan was driven by the school vision rather than by the technology itself.

The Vision of the Administration

Researchers have focused on the vision of the administrator or principal as essential in creating an effective school. In looking at school reform Sybouts (1992) was mindful that school reform can not be legislated, can not be achieved without adequate resources, and can not be achieved without evaluation of educational innovations. Examining school structure, he noted that traditions in school structure as well as routines brought about by administrative practices such as those which foster teacher isolation, hinder positive educational reform. He states:

> Vision has been claimed to be the antidote to tradition. With the help of vision, administrators can break the shackles of educational rites by demonstrating values and commitment to the achievement of goals. A sense of a common purpose and direction among staff can be undergirded by vision and by organizational focus on the future. (Sybouts, 1992, p. 245 - 246)

Sergiovanni (1992), makes reference to Goldham, a school superintendent, who spoke about true change occurring when educators are able to see the connection between why they do what they do and some larger purpose. It involves educators looking at what they are doing from a vantage point other than doing it because others, such as teachers, students, principals, board members or parents, want them to make the change. They must be able to give reasons for what they do, not only for others but also for themselves. The most important undertaking of leadership devoted to improving schools from within, is honoring the visions of others, holding true to one's own vision and at the same time working toward a collective vision and a coherent institutional purpose (Barth, 1990). Relating to Greenleaf's idea of a leader as a servant, Little (1990) suggested that the leader must have a clear understanding of the "roots" out of which the purpose comes (p. 171). The leader must have the ability to interpret the stories that shape and reshape the community in order to develop a leadership which will motivate and unify the community around the purpose. Sergiovanni (1990) agreed with Bennis whose study found vision critical to successful leaders who had "the capacity to create and communicate a compelling vision of a desired state of affairs, a vision that clarifies the current situation and induces commitment to the future" (p. 20). The basic assumption of Sergiovanni's (1980) *The New School Executive* was that the growth and development goals for youngsters are best achieved by teachers and other adults who are committed to the goals themselves, both as persons and professionals. Although a school executive's manipulation of teachers and students in order to achieve these goals may be more efficient, the end result denies the individual's growth and expression and may be damaging to their self concepts.

Drawing on the work of Blumberg and Greenfield, who identified the key element of leadership associated with school effectiveness as that of the principal's vision, Johnston, Licata and Greenfield (1991) developed a school vision inventory diagnostic profile. Its purpose was to measure the extent to which the principal's vision was known and shared within the school. Teachers' responses indicated the extent to which the vision was internalized, exchanged with others, and the extent to which the principal and others were willing to sacrifice to achieve the vision. Pilot study results indicated that teachers did not share the vision to the extent that the principal thought they did.

Lashway (1995) in reviewing the concept of educational leadership, welcomed the administrator's involvement in the heart of the school's mission, but recognized that collaborative approaches were necessary to achieve the goals.

He quoted Prager in saying "the optimal solution would support a collegial, empowering process aimed toward specific instructional goals" (p. 2). He asserted that the literature "has not provided comprehensive models that smoothly integrate facilitative processes with instructional tasks". It is the leader's responsibility to allow for continuing dialogue to keep the school's vision before the community and there may be times when the leader must actively intervene with those whose values are not consistent with the common vision.

Wallace (1996) believed that an effective visionary leader "inspires workers within an organization, relates well to individuals outside the organization, sets the direction for his or her organization, and enables the organization to cope with change" (p. 4). He used data analysis to guide educational leadership and renewal in the cities of Pittsburgh and Providence in building a vision of excellence. In Pittsburgh a needs assessment survey which set the stage for educational reform in 1980, was followed by another survey in 1986 and prompted further educational reforms for the next five years. Several educational programs designed to address the identified needs were created and implemented. Union leadership, union-building representatives, highly regarded teachers and administrators, and influential community leaders were involved in the process. The school board and district's original judgments of the success of the reforms were confirmed by the public. The Providence project also used a community wide survey to determine the schools' needs and ways to improve the schools. The administration and teachers union endorsed the report's recommendations and work was begun on its implementation. The process was continuing at the time of the writing.

Pittsburgh's Research-Based Instructional Supervisory Model (PRISM) grew out of the school district's desire for professional development of principals and teachers. Principals were trained to effectively evaluate teachers with the purpose of improving instruction. Also with the ultimate aim of improving student achievement, several teacher center programs were developed and designed to allow high school teachers an opportunity to upgrade their instructional skills. The programs were designed by the teachers for the teachers. Their success was instrumental in developing a sense of pride in the districts schools. The changes which occurred in these school districts were examples in which Wallace saw visionary leadership function in the critical roles of "direction setter, change agent, spokesperson and coach" (p. 4).

In *The Learning School: A guide to Vision - Based Leadership*, Wallace, Engel and Mooney (1997) discussed the way vision influences educational leadership, the organization of the schools, and the learning in the school. Their model for a learning school consists of four integrated elements: shared vision, authentic teaching and learning, supportive school organization, and assessment. Four case studies illustrate vision in action. Three examples show the development of a school based on a specific vision - McCleary School in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania; Alice Carlson Elementary School in Fort Worth Texas; and Souhegan High School in Amherst, New Hampshire. The fourth related the story of the Santa Monica-Malibu School District. In explaining the steps taken in building a personal vision and a shared vision, Wallace et al emphasize that the clarification of core values is central to the process:

> What you and your collegues believe, value, and are willing to act upon forms the basis of your vision. In turn your vision becomes the driving force to develop a strategic plan for implementation; the vision statement provides the template to ensure that instructional and assessment practices are internally consistent. Additionally, your vision influences

> how the school should be organized and helps clarify the policies, practices and governing structure of the school. (p. 153 - 154)

Also included were guidelines for engaging the community and methods of evaluating visions.

The preceding literature supported the assertion that the vision of the principal or education leader is essential for effective schooling to occur. Also involved in effective leadership is professional development which considers the teacher's personal vision and the part it plays in the accomplishment of the school's vision.

The Vision of the Teacher

According to Clandinin and Connelly (1995) the teacher's knowledge is, "that body of convictions and meanings, conscious and unconscious, that have arisen from experience (intimate, social, and traditional) and that are expressed in a person's practice" (p. 7). Crites, as cited by Clandinin and Connelly (1995), in describing the relationship of theory to practice, speaks of sacred stories as "elusive expressions of stories that cannot be fully and directly told, because they live, so to speak, in the arms and legs and bellies of the celebrants. These stories lie too deep in the consciousness of the people to be directly told" (p. 8).

Barth (1990) indicates that courage is needed on the part of those working in education to develop and share one's personal vision. To expose one's own vision, knowing that it is never static or complete, requires great risk. The personal visions of most school practitioners need no apologies as they flow from the craft knowledge acquired from working in a school day after day. He believes, however, that teachers can not be serious agents of change within a school if they only operate from someone else's prescription of a vision. It is important to find ways to comply with the needs and goals of the school, but "developing ways to foster elements of teachers' and principals' personal visions is a full-hearted, badly needed form of school improvement" (p. 178).

Duffy (1998), a teacher educator, discovered that when educators thought about and eventually articulated what really counted for them, they began to understand that decisions about daily dilemmas of teaching had to be consistent with their values of what they wanted children to become. Their values as individuals came into line with their professional intentions for children and schooling, and gradually these thoughts grew into vision statements. Their vision statements served as "moral compasses" to decide how to use pedagogical information and therefore how to teach (p. 779).

Although there appears to be little research which focuses on the vision of the teacher, related areas such as philosophy as well as beliefs and practice, were studied. George Polya, quoted in Jackson (1968) makes reference to living up to one's philosophy:

> Now in teaching as in several other things, it does not matter much what your philosophy is or is not. It matters more whether you have a philosophy or not. And it matters very much whether you try to live up to your philosophy or not. The only principles of teaching which I thoroughly dislike are those to which people pay only lip service. (p. 113)

In studying teachers who had earned a favorable reputation in the school systems of suburban communities surrounding Chicago, one of Jackson's research questions concerned the relationship between the teacher's work and the institutional framework. When called on to justify their professional decisions, teachers indicated their classroom behavior was based more on impulse and feeling than on reflection and thought. The impulses and intuitive hunches of most of these teachers had been tempered by years of practical experience and therefore the performance which they considered rendered "by heart" was of a type that would have been carefully reasoned or rehearsed by novice teachers (Jackson, 1968, p. 145). Jackson concluded that the basis of their action may have been more rational than their self-reports indicated.

Lortie conducting ninety four interviews of randomly selected teachers of varied grade levels in several school systems. He choose to take into account the beliefs, goals and actions of teachers in assessing the impact of schooling. He found that "despite generations of philosophical ferment and ideological controversy" teachers favored outcomes for students which were relatively traditional; to produce students who liked learning (1975, p. 132). He also observed that vague but demanding school goals created difficulties for classroom teachers, contributed to a sense of non-accomplishment and discouraged the risk-taking required for creativity. It became clear that school officials needed more effective patterns for setting goals with their teachers than those currently in use (p. 233).

Cuban (1984) in giving explanations for classroom stability in the face of reforms and changes, included beliefs, both shared and individual, as one of the reasons. Beliefs shape what teachers choose to do in their classrooms and explain instructional practices that have endured over time. Individual beliefs carry with them the notion of potential teacher change. Beliefs are learned, can be dropped, learned anew or integrated with others. Changes in ideas occur slowly, therefore changes in teacher practice follow shifts in belief patterns among teachers. Although Cuban asserted that the culture of teaching itself is reluctant to change, he stated that the direction of educational reform that offers promise is "toward those improvements that build on the existing teacher-centered pedagogy" which need to be "especially sensitive to the classroom teacher and attempt to understand the world that the teacher faces daily" (p. 9).

Only when the teacher believes that a change will be of benefit to children, adaptable to the current setting, accompanied by tangible help to put the changes into action, and will not undercut the teacher's authority, will teachers embrace the change.

Rokeach (1968) states that the principle of belief congruence asserts that we tend to value a given belief, subsystem, or system of beliefs in proportion to the degree of congruence with our own belief system (p. 83). Building on Rokeach's work, Pajares (1992) concurred that for the purposes of investigation, beliefs must be inferred. Rokeach suggested that the inference must take into account the ways that individuals give evidence of belief such as belief statements, intentionality to behave in a predisposed manner and behavior related to the belief in question (p. 315). Clusters of beliefs around a particular object or situation form attitudes which lead to action. Beliefs within attitudes are connected to one another and to other beliefs in other attitudes, so that a teacher's attitude about a specific educational issue may include beliefs connected to attitudes about the nature of society, community, race and family. These connections create the values that guide's one's life, develop and maintain other attitudes, interpret information and determine behavior. Pajares argued that although little has been done in this area, the investigation of teachers' beliefs were a necessary and valuable avenue of educational inquiry. He, however, cautioned that researchers must study the context-specific effects of beliefs in terms of their connections.

Connelly and Clandinin (1988) also summarized studies of teachers' beliefs. They indicated that some aimed to get into teacher's heads, some behind the classroom door and a few at teacher's backgrounds and history. Both they and Pajares made reference to Janesick's notion of teacher perspective. Janesick, as cited by Pajares (1992) defines teacher perspective as " a reflective, socially defined interpretation of experience that serves as a basis of subsequent action ... a combination of belief, intention, interpretation and behavior that interact continually" (p. 314).

Kagan (1992) defining teacher belief as tacit, unconsciously held assumptions about students, classrooms, and academic materials to be taught, found in reviewing studies on teachers' beliefs, that these beliefs appeared to be relatively stable and resistant to change. They usually reflected the nature of the instruction that the teacher provided to the students and may have been mediated by the epistomological differences inherent in the content area or by the available instructional materials. Kagan states that when teachers accept information from outside sources, they filter it through their own personal belief systems, translating and absorbing it into their own pedagogies (p. 75). The conclusion drawn from the study was that "the more one reads studies of teacher belief, the more strongly one suspects that this piebald form of personal knowledge lies at the very heart of teaching" (p. 85).

Clandinin and Connelly (1995) have investigated teachers' personal practical knowledge. "It is the kind of knowledge that has arisen out of circumstances, practices, and undergoings that themselves had affective content for the person in question" (p. 7). Practice is "broadly conceived to include intellectual acts and self-exploration" (p. 7). In their book *Teachers' Professional Knowledge Landscapes* we find a dilemma when teachers are unable to live up to the expectations of policy makers. The authors indicate that the main reason given for ineffectiveness of mandated school reform is "that teachers divert the plans" (p. 162). Teachers, however, see themselves as "expressing fundamental human desires and, thereby, [are] rising up to take charge of their moral professional landscape, where they live out their professional lives"(p.163). Clandinin and Connelly see this book as offering hope by "naming the qualities of the landscape" with the expectation that there will be a rethinking of the ways in which the parties relate to one another (p. 163). This will allow for the creation of new relational stories of theory and practice.

The first variable considered as we teach is knowing what we want to achieve, indicate Brubaker and Simon (1993). This is sometimes referred to as objectives, goals, desired outcomes or a sense of vision. To fail to recognize the importance of this variable is to let outside forces dictate how we teach. When passion is combined with a sense of vision, energy is shared with others who also become inspired.

It became evident that even though studies have been conducted to see the effects of teachers' belief, philosophy and perspective on teaching, these studies did not take into consideration the vision of the teacher.

Lashway (1997) in reviewing a number of studies on vision indicated that vision is a process that requires continuous reflection, action, and reevaluation. Both talk and action are necessary. He refers to Richard Elmore and colleagues, who after an in-depth study of restructuring schools, found that enthusiasm for new visions did not automatically lead to implications for teaching. They found that it was extremely difficult for teachers "to attain the deep systematic knowledge of practice needed to make the vision a reality. Without unrelenting assessment, the vision may remain a glossy facade rather than becoming a vital, living presence in the life of the school" (p. 4).

Teachers will support educational reform if the reform embodies their personal beliefs or vision of education. A study designed to investigate the compliance and effectiveness of urban school - wide Title I programs, compared one high-performing school with a school which had scores lower than expected. It was found that teachers at the high - performing school, consistently identified the school's vision for learning in terms of the high standards for students, whereas parents and teachers at the less effective school were much less certain of the role of Title I and of the school's mission (Childs-Bowen, 1999). Although Desimone (2000) did not deal specifically with the vision of the school, she cites a study by Bodilly and by Muncey & McQuillan. It indicated that "teachers, who share the vision that large-scale fundamental changes and classroom practice are necessary to improve student outcomes, are likely to support implementation of a model" for comprehensive school-wide reform. Teachers also prefer models that fit with the school's overall environment, staffing, and student population, and those that mesh with reforms already in process.

Identity of the Teacher

Britzman (1991) studied several teachers during their student teaching experience. These teachers found themselves in situations marked by tension between what seemed unalterable and what may be perceived as possibility. She sees the image of teaching as dialogic in that "teaching must be situated in relationship to one's biography, present circumstances, deep commitments, affective investments, social context, and conflicting discourses about what it means to learn to become a teacher" (p. 8). A discourse becomes powerful when it is institutionally sanctioned because the teacher stands "in relationship to what and how something is said and in relationship to the community that makes particular practices possible and others unavailable" (p. 17). Britzman recommends that teachers become researchers and both construct and study their narrative accounts as well as the narrative accounts of others to gain a greater understanding of their own identity as a teacher. With a greater sense of their own identity, teachers are better equipped to operate within the context of the institutionally sanctioned discourse.

Connelly and Clandinin's (1999) recent work continues to refer to the professional knowledge landscape of teachers as having two places: the in-classroom places and out-of-classroom places. The in-classroom space is generally a safe place where "teachers are free to live stories of practice" (p. 2). The out-of-classroom place is a place where "knowledge is funneled into the school system for the purpose of altering teachers' and children's classroom lives" (p. 2). Some teachers can not live with the requirements of the institution or out-of-classroom place and therefore live a "cover story", so what appears to be happening is not actually taking place in the classroom. Connelly and Clandinin conclude from their cases, that institutional stories are crucial influences on teachers' identity. Teachers respond in her own way to the institutional setting. "Each person creates a special place and orientation that is given by her story to live by and that may be said to constitute her professional identity" (p. 92). The interaction of the institutional story and the teacher's story has a direct bearing on the teacher's identity and, by association, on teacher satisfaction. These, Connelly and Clandinin believe, are at the heart "of the theory, policy , and practice of school change and improvement" (p. 100).

Mitchell and Weber (1999) also studied teachers' stories. They encourage the application of "close readings" in order for teachers to come to an understanding of their own identity. Close readings are defined as "those readings that dig below the surface of the text, that ask critical questions, that read between the lines and contextualize the readings historically or politically (p. 172). By investigating popular teacher images, as well as "close reading" their own and others' reactions to teacher images, educators come to a "deeper sense of the collective identity of [the] teacher as well as some often unexpected insights into one's own individual history and identity" (p. 185).

Summary

The unfolding of the concept of world view and its' influence on vision and mission statements has been traced in this chapter. A search revealed that the majority of literature deals with mission statements as they pertain to the corporate world. Authors in the fields of business and education indicate the need for a vision to direct actions, and the more this vision is shared both in its inception and practice, the greater, it is believed, will be the impact. In the area of education much has been written about the importance of "vision" or a "mission statement" created and implemented by the principal, community and staff. Others have elaborated on the process of vision setting and some studies have detailed the process in which schools and school districts have been involved. Results of the vision setting are expected to come over time but few studies have reported these. Research and writing have focused on the role of the administrator regarding vision implementation, and on the integration of vision and program needs. There is little, or no research which examines how the vision of the school is lived out, how it influences the practice of the elementary teacher or how it is congruent with the vision of the teacher. Recent studies on the identity of the teacher indicate that one cause of tension for the teachers is their capacity to shape their experience within the institution's expectations. That could include the vision of the school. The next chapter will include the methodology of the research used to study the question of the relationship between the vision of the teacher and that of the school.

Chapter III

METHODOLOGY

Introduction

This chapter will relate the purpose of educational research, the research paradigm, the research design and the quality of the design. Within the research design is included the purpose of the research, the site description, a brief description of the participants, and the procedures for the entry into the field, data collection and analysis. The study's limitations, validity, dependability, generalizability as well as ethical considerations are considered under the topic of Quality of Design.

The Purpose of Educational Research

Kennedy, who specializes in teacher learning, research use and educational policy, addressed the American Educational Research Association (1997) on *The Connection Between Research and Practice*. Citing Brown, she indicated that if research was to produce important knowledge, it had to occur within the natural constraints of real classrooms and must accommodate the multiple confounding influences which are present in the classroom. In reviewing the place and significance of educational research over the last few decades, Kennedy saw research and practice influenced by, and possibly a victim of the shifting social and political context. "Despite our numerous changes in paradigm, research interests, and assumptions of how it contributed to practice and despite debates over method, we have learned a tremendous amount about our enterprise in the past few decades" (Kennedy, 1997, p. 10), and research has led to a greater understanding of educational practice. Harste, also aware of the variety in research methodology, encouraged educators to develop research methodology for their specific disciplines (Beach, Green, Kamil & Shanahan, 1992). He urged educators not to be afraid to acknowledge who they were and to conduct and report real educational inquiries in real instructional settings. To accomplish this, teachers must become researchers and researchers must be teachers. Harste believed that by hearing new voices in research, new conversations would begin to affect educational practice. As we listen to the voices of the teachers, we gain insight into their struggles, their dilemmas, the action taken and the background for their actions. As the teachers in this study reflected on the questions asked during the interviews, they were forced to think reflectively on their practice and then verbalize their thinking.

Research Paradigm

Merriam (1985) in reviewing educational research indicated that while case study has long been used in medicine, law, anthropology, political science, psychology and social work, recently the area of educational research has recognized the case study as an approach for enhancing our understanding of the process or dynamics of educational practice. Some consider "the case" an object of study, however others such as Merriam, Yin and Stake consider it a methodology (Creswell, 1988; Mertens, 1998; Stake, 1995). The case study is located within the qualitative research paradigm. Mertens, referring to Denzin and Lincoln, defines qualitative research as "multimethod in focus, involving an interpretive, naturalistic approach to subject matter. This means that qualitative researchers study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of, or interpret, phenomenon in terms of the meanings people bring to them..." (Mertens, 1998, p. 160-161). Merriam (1988) characterizes the qualitative research design as having the following characteristics: (a) Researchers are primarily concerned with process rather than outcomes or products. (b) Researchers are interested in meaning which is embedded in people's experiences and mediated through the researcher's own perceptions, (c) Researchers are the primary instrument for data collection and, (d) The research usually involves fieldwork where the researcher physically goes to the people, setting or site to observe behavior in its natural setting.

A case study, as defined by Creswell, is an "exploration of a 'bounded system' or a case (or multiple cases) over time through detailed, in-depth data collection involving multiple sources of information rich in context" (Creswell, 1998, p. 61). According to Merriam (1988), the qualitative case study exhibits the following characteristics: it is particularistic, descriptive, heuristic, and inductive. It is particularistic in that the study focuses on a particular situation, event, program or phenomenon representing or revealing something important about it. It is descriptive in that the end product is a "thick" description of the phenomenon interpreting the data in terms of the cultural norms, community values and attitudes. It is heuristic because the study illuminates the reader's understanding of the phenomenon under study; bringing new meaning, extending the reader's experience or confirming what is known. It is inductive in that the case study mainly relies on inductive reasoning. Generalizations, concepts or hypotheses emerge from the data which is grounded in the context.

The research methodology chosen for this study was that of case study. It is particularistic in that its focus was the practice of two teachers in two different classrooms in an independent Christian school. The study yielded "thick" description of the data which was interpreted in terms of the school community's values and attitudes. It is heuristic in that the study illuminated the reader's understanding of the teachers' practice in light of the school's vision and confirmed what was assumed to be happening. The generalizations emerged from the data.

The most important criteria for differentiating among the various research methodologies one could use is to consider the research questions being asked. In general "what" questions may be exploratory, in which instance the case study is appropriate. "How" and "why" questions are also more explanatory and suited to the use of case studies (Merriam, 1988; Mertens, 1998; Yin, 1994). As the research questions dealt with both the "how" and the "what" of the teachers' practice, the case study methodology was the best fit for this research.

Research Design

Purpose of Study

The purpose of this study was to explore how the vision of an independent Christian school influenced the practice of two of the teachers teaching in the school and also to determine the relationship between each teacher's personal vision and that of the school. The school in which the research was conducted was one of three schools constituting a Christian School Society. It in turn, was a part of a larger body of Christian Schools which has had a history of more than fifty years in Canada and a much longer history in other parts of the world. The aim and purpose of these schools have always been important to their existence. Until the last decade, the vision of this school and Christian schools like it, was portrayed primarily in the school's constitution. A document entitled "Mission Statement" was included in the most recent policy handbook of this particular Christian school. It explained the vision of this school. Because the vision was crucial to the school's existence, members of the board were often concerned if the teaching staff upheld the vision with the same emphasis as did they.

Not only was the study to explore how the vision influenced the practice of the two teachers, but also to determine how the personal vision of the teachers coincided with the vision of the school. Teachers are at times caught in a dilemma in which their personal vision and practice is incongruent with that of the school (Beattie, 1995; Clandinin & Connelly, 1995). Through participant observation and interviews the congruence between the two was explored. By focusing on particular classroom incidences, greater understanding of the teachers' vision was attained as both the teacher and I reflected on the situation.

Site Description

The two classrooms, a grade one classroom and a grade five classroom, in which the research took place were located in an independent Christian School in a large urban center. This school is one of three schools belonging to a parent-governed Society which began more than fifty years ago. This school was chosen as the site for my research because this school had a clear vision since the school society's inception and the society members strongly upheld the tenets of the vision. The school included Kindergarten to grade nine with an enrollment of approximately 300 students. The teachers in the school were certified by Alberta Learning. The school followed the curriculum prescribed by Alberta Learning, integrating a Christian perspective into the program. The aim of the school society was "to provide schooling shaped by the Christian faith as interpreted by the Reformed understanding of the scripture which testifies that Christ is Lord of all" (Appendix A). The policy handbook stated, "By integrating life and studies with the Bible, the Christian school helps students develop a world-view in which a life of faith is not composed of religious activities alongside non-religious activities, but one in which God is gratefully served and honored in all activities" ((1993, p. 103.1 -103.6). I felt this site met the criteria for case selection which Stake (1995) indicated to be a situation which would allow me to maximize what I could learn and which was hospitable to inquiry.

The School's Mission Statement

The history of the mission statement of the school in which the research was conducted is similar to that of other Christian Schools associated with

Christian Schools International. Like other Christian schools, this school appeared to be involved in a continual refining or articulation of the statement. The constitutions of the Christian Schools explain the basis and purpose of the school as well as the responsibilities of the school board, parents, and teachers. A booklet commemorating the dedication and official opening of Calgary Christian School (1965), included a "Basis Article and Educational Creed". The Educational Creed stated, "Believing that the Lord God, by graciously giving us the Scriptures, has revealed to His people certain basic principles intensely relevant to education, we confess..:" What followed was an explanation of each principle. The principles were: Life, Bible, God and Creation, Man, Sin, Christ, The Kingdom of God, Purpose of Education, Parents and The Christian School. Similarly, The Edmonton Society for Christian Education in its Education Statement of Principles (1985), stated that the educational relevance of the basis of the Society was articulated and summarized in a statement of educational principles. The principles, along with a brief explanation of each, included: Bible, God, Jesus Christ, Holy Spirit, Creation, Man, Sin, Covenant, Kingdom, Believer, Schools, Parents, Teachers, The Child, Learning Program, Community and Educational Freedom.

A recent publication by the Christian Schools International includes "Model Bylaws for a Parent-controlled Christian School". The third article stated the "Basis". On this basis the following principles of Christian education are affirmed: The Bible, Creation, Sin, Jesus Christ, Schools, Parents, Teachers, Pupils, Community and Educational Freedom. As in previously noted documents an explanation was given of each topic (Christian Schools International, 2001).

A policy document of the school in which the research was conducted was entitled "Explaining the Schools of the Emmaus Society of Christian

Education". It was adopted by the Board of that Society on September 15, 1987, and began with a two paragraph section entitled "Mission Statement". It reads as follows:

> The Emmaus Christian Schools aim to provide an education that is Christian: that is, shaped by the Christian faith. This Christian faith develops from an understanding of Scripture as reflected in the Reformed heritage. This faith finds its broadest expression in the entire program of instruction. Students are encouraged to develop value judgments which are grounded in the knowledge of our relationship to God, our understanding of ourselves, the knowledge of our relationship to others, our relationship to the world, and the acknowledgment of the Lordship of Christ over all.
>
> In this setting our schools seek to promote sound scholarship and pedagogy, earnest effort, and an obligation to use our talents fully in response to our divine calling to faith. Faithfulness demands a life of action and involvement, and seeks personal piety, integrity, and social responsibility. It recognizes that service to God, others, and ourselves is possible and necessary in all activities, professions, and walks of life. It asserts that the life of Christian service must be lived now. Accordingly our schools provide opportunities for students to experience and apply their learning to Christian action and service. The aim of our schools is to prepare students to live responsive and productive lives of faith to the glory of God in contemporary society -- not merely lives that have a place for religion, or lives which formally relate religious commitment to academic disciples, but lives which in every part, in every manifestation, in their very essence, are Christian.

The Mission statement was followed by a brief statement on "The Foundation of Christian Education" which included affirmations about the Bible, God and Jesus Christ; our task as God's image bearers; redemption of all areas of life; and our place in the world. The primary task of educating children as belonging to parents, the school being an extension of the home, and the participation of the Christian community in Christian education, was articulated in the section entitled "The Place of Christian Education". The implication of children as image bearers of God was also included. The last part, "The Christian School" proposed statements of action for the schools' program, curriculum and pedagogy, as well as the responsibility of the teachers, students, and school board.

The policy handbook used by the school society at the time of the research, contained a section entitled "Mission Statement". The first part included the following areas: Basis, Responsibilities and Elements of Education (Appendix A).

The second part entitled "Explaining The Schools" began with the sub section "Mission Statement". The Mission Statement is the one quoted above. It is followed by the explanation similar to the 1987 document and dated June, 1993.

When considering the brevity of current mission statements, the stated aim of the society, as found in the first paragraph of the mission statement, encapsulated what could be considered the mission of the School Society. The second paragraph could be seen as an elaboration of the first paragraph.

Although the mission statement is rather lengthy, the main components of the first paragraph are:

1. The entire program of Christian education is based on Scripture as reflected in the Reformed heritage.

2. Students develop value judgments grounded in:
    a. knowledge of our relationship to God, others and the world, and our understanding of ourselves, and
    b. the acknowledgment of the Lordship of Christ over all.

The second paragraph, although appearing to be an concretization of the first, emphasizes specific aspects of Christian Education. These are:

1. sound scholarship and pedagogy as well as earnest effort,
2. faithfulness expressed through action, involvement, personal piety and integrity, as well as social responsibility, and
3. responsive service lived in the present.

This school, as well as others belonging to Christian Schools International, has gone through a process of articulating their vision as it comes to expression in their constitution, educational creed and mission statement. The process is an ongoing one.

Participants Involved

Two teachers participated in the case studies. One, having received her Bachelor of Arts degree from a large university, was in her twelfth year of teaching in an independent Christian school where the vision of the school was considered a priority by both parents and board members. She had taught all grades of students in the elementary school, with the exception of grade three and six in either single or combination grade classrooms situations. At the time of the study she was enrolled in courses at a university in anticipation of entering a master's degree program. Her school - related activities included the library committee, organization of book week activities and the supervision of the media club. At the time of the research Carol was teaching grade one.

The second teacher received her degree from a large university, having transferred from a Christian college. For six years she was either a part-time or full time teacher. For two years she taught in the public school system, and since then taught in an independent Christian school system. She taught all of the elementary grades with the primary focus being grades one and five. Joy was teaching grade five at the time of this study. She was active in extracurricular activities which included coaching junior high volley ball and track and field for the Klondike games, directing the choir and the musical, being chairperson of the teachers' Convention Committee, as well as being a member of the district professional development committee.

When teachers are interviewed for teaching positions in the Christian schools of which this one is a part, they are invited to articulate their understanding of the vision of the school. A candidate who succeeds in obtaining a teaching position is expected to become a member of the school society. They, along with parent members of the society, agree to the by-laws and constitution of the society. This includes the mission statement of the school. Each of these teachers had gone through this process thereby affirming their commitment to the vision of the school.

I had worked with all of the teachers from this school in the year preceding my research. During the second term we met regularly after school for an action research project dealing with the teaching of Language Arts. This was done in connection with course work at the University. At the conclusion of that project I invited teachers to contact me if they were interested in working with me on research in their classroom. Two teachers indicated their interest, but one of the teachers was unable to carry through as she had also agreed to have a student teacher at the time of the research. I approached a teacher who I felt exemplified Christian teaching. Her initial feeling of "not being good enough to be involved in a research project" was put aside as she learned more of what was involved in the research project.

Entry into the Field

Appropriate procedures were taken to gain permission to carry on the research in this school. Permission was gained through the principal to conduct the research. The necessary code of ethics form was submitted and approved by the University to assure that every part of the research effort protected the rights of the individual participants (Mertens, 1998; Sowell, 2001).

A bond of trust had already been developed between the teachers and myself so that the entry "into the field" was not a difficult one. Guba and Lincoln (1989) suggest that the participants "are more likely to be both candid and forthcoming if they respect the inquirer and believe in his or her integrity." They go on to say:

> The development of trust ... is something to which the [constructivist] inquirer must attend from the very inception of the inquiry. In a very real sense the ultimate credibility of the outcomes depends upon the extent to which trust has been established. But trust is *biographically specific*, that is , it is a relationship existing between two persons on a one-to-one basis; thus the constructivist inquirer will have to attend to the development of trust with *each* respondent. Further, the building of trust is a *developmental task*; trust is not something that suddenly appears after certain matters have been accomplished ("a specificable set of procedural operations"), but something to be worked on day to day. Moreover, trust is not established once and for all; it is fragile, and even trust that has been a long time building can be destroyed overnight in the face of ill-advised action. (p. 200)

Mertens indicated that "all contexts have their own cultural norms and expectations based on various biological and socially defined characteristics of the people in them" (1998, p. 178) and therefore the researcher should be sensitive to them. Prior to returning to university I had served as the principal in a school where these same teachers had taught. I realized this might have a bearing on the research. As Merriam indicates, "if participants are apprehensive about being judged, they may respond in socially desirable ways" (1988, p. 95). I did not feel this would present a problem, as my role now was one of learning from the teachers and I was no longer associated with the school. I also felt they respected me and trusted my integrity based upon their prior professional experiences.

I made plans to enter each classroom in the least disruptive manner possible; at times most suitable to the teacher. In each classroom I took care to establish good rapport with the participants - accommodating myself to the routines, establishing what we had in common, helping both the teacher and the students; just being myself and acting like a person who belonged in the classroom (Mertens, 1998). I was at the school approximately four days per week for sixteen weeks and the time spent on site varied from three to five hours per day. I began my participant observation in the grade one class. For a time I was in both the grade one and grade five classroom. My final weeks of participant observation were in the grade five classroom.

Data Collection

One of the defining features of the case study is multiple methods of data collection. By collecting data from several perspectives, case study researchers use the principle of triangulation to increase confidence in their findings (Moon & Trepper, 1996; Guba & Lincoln, 1981). Triangulation means "comparing and contrasting information drawn from different sources, and /or determined by different methodologies" and is "useful for verifying information on the same event from different actors or participants" (Guba &

Lincoln, 1981, p. 257). Data for this study included field notes, journal notes and transcriptions collected by the researcher as participant observer and interviewer. Documents, journals, artifacts and video tapes also contributed to the data.

Researcher's Role

In qualitative research the researcher is the primary instrument for data collection and therefore must maximize every opportunity for collecting data and producing meaningful information. Qualitative researchers, according to Strauss and Corbin (1990), require theoretical and social sensitivity, the ability to maintain analytical distance while at the same time drawing upon past experience and theoretical knowledge to interpret what is seen, astute powers of observation, and good interactional skills. Spradley (1980) in describing the participant observer role indicates that the role will vary from one situation to another, but that the researcher will have to allow it to evolve as the study develops. My role was different in the two classrooms right from the beginning. When entering the grade one classroom, I was greeted and the teacher immediately proceeded with her teaching. I made myself comfortable, but before the end of the first hour I was involved by working with individual children. The age level of the students seldom allowed times for solely observing the class; most of the time I was involved in some way or another. The opportunity for observation without being involved occurred when the teacher taught a lesson to the whole class. By contrast I was formally introduced upon entering the grade five class. An explanation was given as to what I was studying at the University and why I would be a part of the class for the upcoming weeks. The students kept their distance and only after the teacher assigned individual students to work with me on editing their writing, did a rapport begin to develop between myself and the students. Because of the age of the students I was more cautious, trying to read when increased closeness was appropriate. In general there was more time for observation without being directly involved with students, as the time of teacher-taught or teacher-directed discussion was greater than in the grade one class.

Each sense of the researcher must be alert to cues and nuances provided by the context - the setting, people, behaviors, verbal and non-verbal cues. During my initial observations I became aware of both teachers' use of non-verbal cues. Further observation led me to understand the meanings of these cues. I learned that some were used with certain students and not with others. Also necessary is a keen sense of timing; when to observe more closely and when observation must conclude, when to allow for silence and when to probe more deeply, or when to change the direction of an interview (Merriam, 1988). Although I most often began the interview with an opening question, the interview at times took a course directed by the teacher. There were times of silence as the teacher tried to collect her thoughts or was reflective about the explanation given or the story being told.

The qualitative researcher can only obtain depth and detail of data by getting close both physically and psychologically to the phenomenon, therefore there has to be a commitment to get close, to be factual and to be descriptive in order to understand and represent the participants in their own terms (Janesick, 1994; Merriam, 1988). Features of the participant observer role include: participating as well as watching yourself and others; making yourself explicitly aware of what others take for granted; looking beyond the immediate focus of one's attention; experiencing being both an "insider" and an "outsider" simultaneously; engaging in introspection to more fully understand the experiences, and keeping a record of what is seen and experienced (Spradley, 1980, p. 58). The preceding became part of my life as a participant observer.

The researcher needs to be a good communicator, being able to empathize, establish rapport, ask good questions and listen intently. This skill was evident in the course of our interviews by the fact that the teachers did far more of the talking than did I, and there were times that we were so "in tune" with each other in the conversation that the teacher would complete my sentence.

Essential to the effective functioning of the researcher is a clear understanding of the purpose of the study and an understanding of the theoretical issues. These affect the judgments which have to be made throughout the data collection and may alert the researcher to clues that may need to be followed (Yin, 1994). Uppermost in my mind was the correlation between the vision of the school and the teachers' practices. Although I was seeing evidence of it in their practice, I constantly looked for opportunities during interviews to have the teachers verbally articulate their understanding of the school's vision.

Researchers influence the classroom situation in which they participate. As Ravn (1991) indicates, researchers have to acknowledge the influence they have on the research situation as well as the role they play in co-constructing the reality of those included in the research. This implies responsibility which involves integrity and a personal sense of values. This was made evident when one of the teachers said to me, "They [the students] are so attached to you. You could walk in and you could take over for a day; no problem, because you have developed that much rapport" (Interview, March 15).

A single classroom situation may be interpreted or seen in more than one way. Researchers must acknowledge that what may appear as entirely different worlds are but perspectives of the same world. Each perspective yields a view of the *same* whole, but a *different* view (Ravn, 1991, p. 98). Von Glasersfeld (1991) maintained that the most important changes to education came about from the assumption that what a knowing person produces as an attempt to solve a problem or an answer to a question, is a manifestation of something that makes sense in that person's present construction of his or her experiential world. Reality is what is reconstructed from the observer's current understandings, but on the other hand, resists interpretation and reconstruction. To deal with this problem, the observers have to be aware of their own assumptions and at the same time approach each situation as if it were totally new (Altrichter, Posch and Somekh, 1993, p. 83).

Participant Observation

As a participant observer one has the opportunity to perceive reality from the viewpoint of someone "inside" the case study rather than on the "outside" (Yin, 1994, p. 88). According to Kidder, observation is a research tool when it serves a formulated research purpose, is planned deliberately, is recorded systematically and subjected to checks and controls on validity and reliability (Merriam, 1988). A participant observer sees things first hand and uses his/her knowledge and expertise in interpreting what is observed. This makes it possible to record behavior as it is happening including behaviors people may not feel free to talk about and may not want to discuss. From my initial observation in the grade five classroom, I noticed one boy who required a lot of attention because of his behavior. The teacher's comments to him appeared curt and to the point. At times they were so blunt that I felt they lacked a sense of caring. It did not take long before this behavior was a topic of our interview. The teacher reflected on and spoke of the reasons for her attitude. An "outsider" may see things quite differently than does "an insider".

During the entry phase of the observation the observer must be passive and relatively unobtrusive, establishing rapport, becoming familiar with the routines and helping out where needed. As I became more familiar with the research situation, the mix of observation and participation gradually changed.

Merriam (1988) in relating to the mix of observation and participant makes use of Gans' term, "researcher participant" which is described as the researcher participating in a social situation but being only partially involved, so that the researcher can still function as a researcher (p. 93). The real struggle in participating is that at the same time one must try to stay sufficiently detached to observe and analyze. Frequently there was a temptation for me to become overly involved, taking delight in the situation and at the same time realizing the "researcher" may be missing something. How much one records is dependent on the extent to which one becomes involved in the situation (Yin, 1994, p. 89). I became involved in the grade one classroom situation quite quickly which did not allow me to take copious field notes as the action was happening. This was a contrast to the grade five classroom where a greater amount of field notes were taken in the first few days while I was in the classroom.

Observation can range from deciding ahead of time what to observe to the less structured routine of scanning the whole situation. What I observed was determined by the purpose in conducting the study. Merriam elaborates on this by referring to Goetz and LeCompte who indicate that what to observe is determined by the topic, by the conceptual framework, by the data that begins to emerge in interacting with the daily flow of events and activities, and by the intuitive reactions and hunches that the researcher experiences as these factors come together (Merriam, 1988). Data collection is demanding, hard work (Merriam, 1988; Yin, 1994). It involves being able to interpret the information as it is being collected and to know if it contradicts previous information or if it leads to a need for additional evidence (Yin, 1994). According to Patton, a skilled observer writes descriptively, practices the discipline of recording field notes, knows how to separate detail from trivia and uses rigorous methods to validate observation (Merriam, 1988).

Although I was trying to collect data in a manner consistent with the literature, I sometimes felt inadequate. Gans (1982) indicated a number of sources of anxiety which makes data gathering difficult. I could identify with these as I often wondered, "Am I doing the right thing at the right time?" "How do I make sense out of what I am studying?" "How do I bring order to this data?" He also refers to the inherent deception in participant observation which leads to a feeling of taking more than one is giving. I faced a dilemma of wanting to become more involved than was possible and therefore having to put aside my personal needs (p. 58 - 59). Initially I also had the concern as to how much my presence in the classroom affected what was being observed. With time, my presence became less obvious to the students.

Participant observation is a major means of collecting data in case study research. By combining a first hand account of the situation under study with data from interviewing and document analysis, a holistic interpretation of the phenomenon being studied, emerges (Merriam, 1988). Guba & Lincoln state:

> In situations where motive, attitudes, beliefs, and values direct much, if not most of human activity, the most sophisticated instrumentation we possess is still the careful observer - the human being who can watch, see, listen ... question, probe, and finally analyze and organize his direct experience. (1981, p. 213)

Interviews

Although the participant observer is a key component in data collection, the interview provides data to augment the researcher's observations. Interviews are an essential source of case study evidence because most case studies are about human affairs. Those most informed about the topic of study can provide important insights into the situation (Yin, 1994). In qualitative case study research, the main purpose of an interview is to obtain a special kind of information. The researcher wants to find out what is "in or on someone's mind." Patton (1980) quoted in Merriam (1988) explains further:

> We interview people to find out from them those things we can not directly observe....We cannot observe behaviors that took place at some previous point in time. We cannot observe feelings, thoughts and intentions. We cannot observe situations that preclude the presence of an observer. We cannot observe how people have organized the world and the meanings they attach to what goes on in the world - we have to ask people questions about those things. The purpose of interviewing, then, is to allow us to enter into the other person's perspective. (p. 72)

At one point, an interview question about something I had observed in class led the teacher to relate an earlier teaching experience which was similar to the one I had observed. With detail she described the history and feelings of the situation, giving insight as to why she reacted as she did in the current teaching situations.

The researcher must go into the interview with the attitude that the participant has something to contribute, has an experience worth talking about and has an opinion of interest to the researcher (Merriam, 1988). The key to getting good data from interviewing is to ask good questions. The way questions are worded, as well as a clear understanding of the wording, are crucial in obtaining the desired information. "Questioning" says Nigel (1993) "should be as open-ended as possible, in order to gain spontaneous information about attitudes and actions, rather then rehearsed positions" and "should encourage respondents to communicate their underlying attitudes, beliefs and values, rather than a glib or easy answer" (p. 138). Probing is an interviewing skill which encourages the respondent to give "as full a response as the format allows" and is used whenever the interviewer hears something that in a normal conversation would cause one to wonder (p. 141). There were instances with both teachers in which I asked the question, "Why is that so important to you?" In both cases I questioned the teacher because the observation made was of an action which they had repeated more than once. The inquiry resulted in a story from the teacher. At other times I made comments such as, "And that's why it's important to ..." or "Well, that's why I wondered because that was a statement you made..." That again led to a fuller explanation on the part of the teacher.

Interviews can range in structure from those in which the questions and the order in which they are asked are predetermined, to the totally unstructured interviews in which nothing is set ahead of time (Merriam, 1988; Nigel, 1993). An investigator new to collecting data may feel more confident with a structured interview format, where most, if not all of the questions are written out ahead of time (Merriam, 1988). My initial interviews were conducted in this manner. The teacher was given a written set of questions based on my classroom observation. After having read the questions each teacher could begin with a question of her choice. Interpretive questions were often used in the interviews that followed. An observed incident, routine or behavior in the classroom was the initiative for many interpretive questions. I gave a tentative interpretation of what the teacher had been saying or doing and then requested their reaction. The open-ended questions raise an issue but do not provide or suggest any structure for the reply, therefore the respondent is given "opportunity to answer in his own terms and to respond from or create his own frame of reference" (Guba & Lincoln, 1981, p. 177).

The interviewer/respondent interaction is a complex phenomenon. Witherell & Noddings (1991) speak of dialogue in this way:

> Dialogue allows the negotiation of meanings through which the self in relation to other selves and to one's cultural communities is constituted.

> Dialogue enables us to decipher language by entering what Roland Barthes describes as the "kitchen of meaning," where we "struggle with a certain innocence of objects" (1988, p. 158) as we acknowledge the complexities of language and of that which we take for granted. It is here that we are frequently called to confront the fact that "what everybody knows" is all too often not what everybody knows. (p. 7)

Both the interviewer and the respondent bring biases, predispositions, and attitudes that color the interaction and the data elicited. Although it is impossible to escape the human factor in the interview situation, the interviewer can minimize distortion by being neutral and nonjudgemental no matter how a respondent's revelations may violate the interviewer's own standards. Respondents may fear "*being shown up*" and therefore "avoid describing aspects of behavior or attitudes that are inconsistent with their preferred self-image" or may also give those answers which they anticipate the interviewer wants to hear (Nigel, 1993, p. 138). I sometimes wondered if the spontaneous laughter was an indication of an uneasiness on the part of the teacher in revealing something with which she was not totally comfortable. A good interviewer is respectful, refrains from arguing, is sensitive to the verbal and nonverbal messages being conveyed, and is a good reflective listener (Merriam, 1988). Being a good listener, Yin (1994) contends, is to capture "the mood and affective components" and understand "the context from which the interviewee is perceiving the world" as the interviewee responds to an incident (p. 57). Interviews are also subject to bias, poor recall or inaccurate articulation and therefore information gleaned from them must be corroborated with other sources of information.

Kvale (1996) summarizes the key characteristics of the qualitative interview. An interview is obtaining knowledge through interpersonal interaction about the lived world of the subjects and their relationship to it. The interviewer attempts to obtain "open nuanced descriptions of different aspects of that life world" and yields descriptions of specific situations or action sequences seeking to interpret the meaning of central themes in the life world of the subject. Through focused interviews, the interviewer seeks qualitative knowledge expressed through normal language and exhibits an openness to new and unexpected phenomenon. The interview process may produce new insights and awareness and the interview may change the meanings or descriptions which in some cases may reveal contradictions in the interviewee's lived world. Sensitivity to the topic and knowledge of the topic by the interviewer may reveal different statements on the same theme from the respondent. A well conducted interview should be a positive experience for the interviewee and may even produce new insights into the interviewee's own life.

I used the tape recorder to record interview data. Barring mechanical failures, it ensures that everything that is said is preserved for analysis. The verbatim transcription of the recorded interview provided a data base for analysis in this research. Selective transcriptions were made of some of the tapes after many were transcribed verbatim. I took some notes in addition to the tape recording of the interview. Notes were also taken by me of some of the informal interviews or conversations.

Other Sources of Data

Documentary data can ground an investigation in the content of the problem being investigated. Documents not only provide valuable information about the issue itself, but can also stimulate thinking about important questions to pursue through more direct observation and interviewing (Merriam, 1988). The policy handbook of the school which included the vision statement was one such document. The constitution of the Lacombe Christian school served as an historical document.

One of the teachers kept a journal during the time of the research. The purpose of the journal was to reflect on her classroom practice. Although it was a requirement for a course at the university, she felt it would also be of value to this research. It was a valuable source of data concerning her attitudes, beliefs and view of the world (Merriam, 1988).

Writings by students and response to assignments also served as data for the study.

The transcripts of the previous study I had conducted with the staff at the school served as background material to the study. The transcripts of the conversation of these two particular teachers during those previous sessions gave insight into their beliefs and practice.

A video tape of approximately one hour was made in each of the classrooms. These recorded non-verbal behavior as well as the verbal interaction and served as a visual reminder of the research setting.

Data Analysis

Data collection and analysis are on-going in qualitative research. "Analysis is a matter of giving meaning to first impressions as well as to final compilations. Analysis essentially means taking something apart. We take our impressions, our observations, apart.... Analysis and interpretation are the making sense of all this" (Stake, 1995, p.71). Analysis begins with the first observation and the first interview and continues on as an interactive recursive process. "Emerging insights, hunches and tentative hypotheses direct the next phase of data collection, which in turn leads to refinement or reformulation of one's questions, and so on" (Merriam, 1988, p. 119).

My process of analysis became more intensive once the data was collected and virtually all of it was transformed into written form. Even after the interview tapes were transcribed, I often listened to the tapes on my travels to or from Edmonton in order to become more familiar with the content of the tapes. The video tapes were not fully transcribed. They did however, serve as a reminder of the classroom setting, the mannerisms and "way of being" of the teacher in the classroom and of the interactions of the teacher with the various people within the classroom. Following the review of the research proposal, the data relating to each teacher was organized chronologically and read through several times from beginning to end.

As Merriam indicated, "exactly how a researcher makes sense of the data, sees patterns or relationships, or discovers theory cannot be explained as a logical process. There is an element of intuition involved; much depends on the investigator's sensitivity to the data" (1988, p. 148). Stake concurs when he states, "there is much art and much intuitive processing to the search for meaning" (1995, p. 72). There are, however, protocols which direct the process of analysis. Ultimately the goal is to gain meaning from the data. All research is a search for patterns, for consistencies. Acknowledging that qualitative data requires aggregation and sorting in order for meanings to become clear, Stake indicates that case study relies on two strategic methods for the researcher to reach new meanings. One is through direct interpretation of the individual instance and the second is through "aggregation of instances until something can be said about them as a class"(1995, p. 74). Direct interpretation involves both analysis and synthesis as the researcher concentrates on the instance, "trying to pull it apart and put it back together again more meaningfully" (p. 75). During observation, good records of events were kept to provide description for further analysis and eventual reporting. "The story often starts to take shape during the observation,[and] sometimes does not emerge until write-ups of many observations are poured over" (p. 62).

While reading the data, I jotted down notes, comments, queries and observations in the margins beside the chunks of data. A chunk of data indicated an incident, idea, or event. This labeling of each chunk called "open coding", broke the data apart allowing for comparisons of similarities or differences (Sowell, 2001). The margin notes isolated the most important aspects of the data and regularities began to reveal themselves. From these patterns and regularities I developed categories. Guidelines found in the literature were used for developing categories: the frequency with which something arises in the data indicates its importance, one's audience may determine what is important, and uniqueness may indicate importance. Incidents, ideas or events that reinforce, explain or reject information already known, may indicate importance (Guba & Lincoln, 1981; Merriam 1998). Bogdan and Biklen (1992) indicate that both the data and the researcher determine the coding "for it is social values and ways of making sense of the world that can influence which processes, activities, events, and perspectives researchers consider important enough to code" (Merriam, 1988, p. 172). van Manen (1990) suggests attending to the text wholistically and finding a phrase that captures the significance of the text as a whole, or upon reading the text repeatedly selecting statements which reveal that which is essential about the phenomenon being studied. He stated that, "in determining the universal or essential quality of a theme our concern is to discover aspects or qualities that make a phenomenon what it is and without which the phenomenon could not be what it is" (p. 107).

Once the categories were defined, I "fleshed [them] out and made [them] more robust by searching the data for more and better units of relevant information" (p. 135). Units of data, as defined by Bogdan and Biklen (1992), are “pieces of your fieldnotes, transcripts, or documents that fall under the particular topic represented by the coding category” (p. 176). Using the various pieces collected, my next task was to write a comprehensive description of the teaching practice of each of the teachers. This included my own interpretation as well as references to other research which served to bring greater understanding to each case. What is written down was interpretation. I, as the researcher, decided what was the case’s own story, or at least what of the story I would include in the report (Denzin, 1994; Stake, 1994).

Following Stake’s guideline for case study, I summarized what I felt I understood about the case study and how my generalizations or assertions had changed “conceptually or in level of confidence”(1995, p. 123). Stake indicates that it is the researcher’s choice to determine “how much we should organize our analysis and interpretations to produce the researcher’s propositional generalizations ... or to provide input into the reader’s naturalistic generalizations” (p. 86). Knowledge is socially constructed. Through my writing, I passed along my personal meaning of the events and relationships of this research and anticipated that the reader will also “add and subtract, invent and reshape - reconstructing the knowledge” (Stake, 1994, p. 241) so that it will become personally useful. In the end it is the researcher’s responsibility to produce “high-quality input” to assist the reader in “arriving at high - quality understanding. The analyses and interpretations of researchers need to be paralleled by those of readers” (Stake, 1995, p. 88).

In research such as this, where more than one case is studied, three types of analyses were possible: within-case analysis, cross-case analysis, and comparison of the cases with the literature (Cresswell, 1998; Moon & Trepper, 1996). Huberman and Miles (1994) caution researchers in cross-case analyses that the result could be high levels of inference ending in a “smoothed set of generalizations that may not apply to any single case". Citing Noblit and Hare (1983) they advocate "preserving the uniqueness [of the case], yet also making comparisons" (p. 435). I attempted to do this in the chapter which follows the individual case studies.

Quality of Design

Limitations of Study

The study results may be limited by the sensitivity and the integrity of the investigator as the investigator is left to rely on her own instincts and abilities throughout the research (Merriam, 1988, p. 33). As a human I am limited, therefore may be mistaken, miss opportunities and may have my personal "bias" interfere (Merriam, 1988; Nigel, 1993). All observations and analysis are filtered through one's world-view, one's values and one's perspective (Merriam, 1988). It was I who interpreted the initial data; deciding what was important and what was not, and it was my interpretation which determined the written product. Bias both interferes and informs. As van Manen indicates, "our 'common sense' pre-understandings, our presuppositions, assumptions, and the existing bodies of scientific knowledge, predispose us to interpret the nature of the phenomenon before we have come to grips with the significance of the phenomenological question" (1990, p. 47). He suggests that it is best to make explicit one's understandings, beliefs and assumptions. My world view and assumptions have been included in the first chapter of the study.

This study was also limited in that it was conducted in two classrooms in a Christian school setting.

Internal Validity

Internal validity deals with how one's findings match reality (Merriam, 1988). It is an assessment in terms of interpreting the researcher's experience, rather than in terms of reality itself (Merriam, 1985; Merten, 1998). One of the assumptions on which qualitative research is based is that "reality is holistic, multidimensional and ever-changing; it is not a single, fixed objective phenomenon waiting to be discovered, observed, and measured" (Merriam, 1988, p. 167). Merriam refers to Guba and Lincoln (1985) who indicate that the validity of the study rests on the investigator's showing "'that he or she has *represented those multiple constructions adequately*, that is, that the *reconstructions* (for the findings and interpretations are also constructions, it should never be forgotten) that have been arrived at via the inquiry are *credible to the constructions of the original multiple realities*' (p. 296)" (p.168).

Of the strategies which can be used to ensure internal validity, triangulation, member checks, long term observations, and researcher bias were utilized in this study. Triangulation is the use of multiple sources of data (notes from participant observation, interviews, journals, video tapes, and documents) and multiple methods of confirming the emerging findings. "The finding or conclusion in a case study is likely to be much more convincing and accurate if is based on several different sources of information, following a corroboratory mode" (Yin, 1994, p. 92). Member checks or taking the data and interpretations back to the teachers and asking them if the results were plausible was also done. The data was gathered over a period of time in order to increase the validity of the findings. My assumptions and world view were clarified at the beginning of the study. The best way to deal with bias is to be aware of how bias may shape what we hear, how it interferes with our reproduction of the speaker's reality and how it can transfigure "truth into falsity" (Merriam, 1988, p. 39).

Dependability

Dependability refers to the results of the study making sense or being consistent in considering the data that was collected. Techniques used to ensure dependability include explaining the investigator's position, triangulation and leaving an audit trail (Merriam, 1988). The investigator explains the assumptions and theory behind the study, the basis for selecting the participants, a description of them and the social context from which the data was collected. The first chapter, as well as this chapter relate these aspects. Multiple methods of data collection and analysis were used for the study. Earlier in this chapter I described how the data was collected and analyzed.

Generalizability

Generalizability relates to what the reader is trying to learn from the case study and involves leaving the extent to which the study's findings apply to other situations up to the people in those situations. The case study researcher can improve generalizability of the findings by providing a rich thick description so that those who are interested in transferability have a base from which to start; establishing the typicality of the case and conducting a cross-case analysis. The commonalities found in the two cases are described in the chapter following the individual case studies (Merriam, 1988; Mertens, 1998). The typicality of the case was established by the description of the participant and the setting earlier in this chapter as well as in the first part of each case study to follow.

Ethical Considerations

Ethical dilemmas are likely to emerge during the collection of data or in the dissemination of the findings. I submitted the ethics application form and it was approved by the University of Alberta. I made available a copy of the research proposal to the teachers and the administration of the school prior to the commencement of the study. Because the research was conducted in the classroom, a letter, which I composed, was sent home to parents informing them of the focus and intent of the study. Teachers were informed by me of their option to drop out of the study at any point in the research. I took care to honor and respect the teachers during the interview process. There was one point at which a teacher asked that the tape recording cease during the discussion of a sensitive issue. The teachers were not necessarily aware of all that had been observed until they read the observations in the written document. The "member checks" (Mertens, 1998, p. 182) allowed the teachers opportunity to give feedback before the document was completed. Pseudonyms were used throughout the document in order to protect the identity of those involved.

Summary

This chapter has focused on the case study methodology including both the research design and factors which affected the quality of the design. The purpose of research in general, and this study in particular, was followed by a description of the site as well as a brief description of the two teachers participating in the study. Elaboration was given on the procedures for entry into the field, data collection and analysis. Since the researcher is the primary instrument of data collection, the researcher's role, participant observation and interviews were explained within that section. Other sources of data were also identified. Explanations of the limitations of the study, internal validity, dependability, generalizability and ethical considerations indicated measures taken to ensure the quality of the design. The next two chapters will focus on my findings of the study of the individual teachers. This in turn will be followed by a comparison of my findings of both of the participants.

Chapter IV

CASE STUDY # 1: JOY

Introduction

The purpose of the study was twofold: to explore how the vision of the school influenced the practice of the teacher and secondly, to explore the relationship between the personal vision of the teacher and the collective vision of the school. This chapter will indicate what I found as I worked with Joy in her classroom. Three weeks of interaction in the classroom had occurred before the first formal interview was conducted.

When I came into the classroom on the first day I was introduced to the class and Joy explained that I would be helping in the classroom and also would be observing how the mission statement of the school was lived out in the classroom. I was curious if the students knew the meaning of "mission statement" or if they knew their school's mission statement. Later I discovered Joy had talked to the students about the mission statement. In the process of creating a mission statement, the students' input had been requested.

> Some of the kids came out with good responses as to what their mission (was) and what a school should prepare them for and how they should help ... They knew that the teachers were talking about God, and about Christian Education, and how we wanted them (the students) to become all linked together in this; what our ideal for our school was. (Interview, July 20)

The physical appearance of the classroom gave indication as to the character and vision of the teacher with whom I worked. It was a colorful classroom with balloons cut out of paper on the back wall, clowns for each month on the side wall and cursive letters as well as student art work, the classroom schedule and calendar at the front. The three bulletin boards along the side displayed “Moovelous Reads”, with a cow for each student, “Reach for the Top” and “Dive into Division”. The letters “Hallelujah!” and “Rejoice, Be Happy” filled the space beside and above the coat hangers. The coat room was separated from the seating area by filing cabinets and shelves with cubby holes for classroom materials arranged neatly beside them. Uniform boxes labeled with the names of units filled the top shelf. A “Castlemania” center display was at the back of the room with pillars and back drop against the wall. A three dimensional display of a castle graced the top of the bookshelf. A waist height shelf held equipment for science experiments. On the first day I arrived the desks were arranged in three rows of four, with a semi circle of five more desks at the front of the classroom. During the time I worked in the classroom the desks were moved often to suit the needs of the students or the strategy required for a learning task. A couch, which was comfortable for reading, was in the back corner beside a set of shelves filled with reading books.

My first impression was that the classroom was a busy, fast pace place with students involved in a variety of learning activities. The students appeared to know what to do and Joy, purposefully went from one student to another, giving help where needed as they worked on activities from the “Castlemania” centers. Other adults came and went helping specific individuals. Sometimes Joy stopped what she was doing to talk with them, but often it seemed there was an expectation that they knew what they were about.

Joy made many verbal interchanges with students within the first few minutes that I was in the classroom. Comments, each made to a different student, included:

> It’s not quantity; it’s quality.
>
> What did you work on with Mrs. V.?
>
> Janey, you have a great poem! That was easy once you got the structure.

> You looked in the book? I'll help you then.
>
> It's bigger than a castle!
>
> Look it up. Get out the dictionary. (Field notes, Apr. 2)

To the group as a whole she said, "I'm getting too much noise. I don't mind when you have to share ideas, but I do mind when people who need quiet time, don't have quiet time to think." My field notes from that first day also included:

> She seems to have eyes at the back of her head. She only says a name once and the student responds. She is quick to pick up on individual student's questions and she answers them quickly and efficiently. She said she would give them three to four minutes to finish and clean up before reading the next chapter of *Castle in the Attic* and the students were ready within the time limit. (Field notes, Apr. 2)

I wondered already on the first day, "How does this tie into Joy's vision of teaching? I wonder if she can articulate it?" It wasn't until three weeks later that the question, "Why do you teach what you teach?" came up in our conversation:

> Curriculum connections would probably be the primary driver. I have to teach certain things. That's why I taught the chemistry unit, the math unit, the [Alberta Learning] curriculum - that's what I have to follow. That's my first obligation. In Language Arts we have way more space. (Interview, Apr. 24)

This was the beginning of a lengthy conversation in which Joy shared what was important for her in teaching. A number of themes emerged which included : striving for the best, caring, making choices, and the importance of community (both learning and parental). These themes were not unfamiliar as I had seen evidence of them as I worked with Joy in her classroom. As I continued in the classroom there was increased evidence of these themes. The basis of and for her teaching arose in practice, as well as in subsequent interviews. This she called "grassroots". It became evident that Joy sometimes did not see a need to articulate "the grassroots" in our discussions as they were part and parcel of who she was and also of our shared background.

Themes

Operating Out of "Grassroots"

> It always has to come back to - You try to teach these kids to follow God's Word. How are we going to do it? What's the best way to do it? And it has to come back to that grassroots all the time. (Interview, July 20)

Joy's comment indicated her foundation for teaching. Each day began with devotions. It's important says Van Dyk (1997) not only to hear "the Word of God speak to our lives as individuals, but also to our life together in the classroom. In this way devotions set a tone for the day and pervade all the other classroom activities we design" (p. 11).

A tone of thankfulness to God was set with the devotions of May 13. "What does eternal life mean?" asked Joy. Several students responded giving their understanding of the term. "I know many of you know John 3:16, but I want you to look it up anyway." Eventually each student was given opportunity to personalize the verse by writing it out on a page which had a picture of a gift on it. The class was asked to list other gifts they received from God. Before praying Joy asked if there was anything the students wished to pray about. She started the prayer, left room for them to pray, and then concluded the prayer (video, May 13).

Joy read Chapter 12 of *Castle in the Attic*. In the discussion which followed, "The Code of Honor" was related to what the Bible talked about in

Ephesians 6: 10 -17. Because the story was about a knight she indicated that this piece in the Bible also talked about being a knight. As she read, she paused, eliciting from the students the characteristics a Christian needed: truth, righteousness, belief in God, the Word of God, and being ready to walk forward with the message of peace. After further discussion the students' assignment was to write their own rules of conduct for a Christian. When asked, "How many rules should you have?" the response was, "Whatever you think you need." They worked quietly for about twenty minutes and those willing to share did so. Because Joy had been walking around observing what the students wrote, she encouraged some to share if they had not done so initially (Field notes, Apr. 3).

Several days later the class focused on the Biblical truth that "God does not change, He still loves". Joy read Numbers 23:19 and asked the students what the verse told them about God. Following the response that God isn't like us; He keeps His promises and doesn't change, they together completed a chart on the board indicating the ways we are different than God. This concluded with a time of prayer which included a time for silent prayer. Joy closed the prayer asking God for consistency in her own actions in the classroom (Field notes, Apr. 19).

Joy did not shy away from or avoid the evil and the result of evil portrayed in the Bible. In reviewing the story of David and Bathsheba, she elicited the four commandments David was guilty of breaking. She then charted the history of David and all of his wives to help the students understand the next story. The story told of Amnon raping his half-sister, Tamar, and the resulting anger of her brother, Absalom. Explaining the situation in the culture of that time meant devastating dishonor for Tamar. Absalom's plot to kill his half-brother succeeded and deeply grieved his father David. Discussion of the story lead to practical implications of what happens when we fail to deal with an injustice against humanity (video, May 13).

In an interview I asked Joy why it was so important to her that students communicate effectively. She had mentioned this in the action research project and several times in our conversations. She indicted that one thing students had to understand was that "life goes beyond themselves", and secondly, conflict often results when only part of the story is known or communicated (Interview, May 8). Joy indicated that the class had noted this as they had studied a number of Bible stories. One lesson using the content of a Bible story was a practical illustration for the class; one which Joy allowed to ~~be~~ played out fully. Interestingly Joy had commented before the students began the exercise, " It [your ideas] may be in your head, but you have to make it so clear that others can understand it." The students were given an assignment sheet which required groups to summarize different sections of a Bible story. Since one section built on the previous section, it was necessary for the first group to include all the details. The first group failed to identify "they", resulting in confusion and frustration for the remainder of the groups. Another group presented incorrect information. Following the lesson, the students were asked to identify what they had learned from doing the summary exercise. They concluded, "If you use 'them' or 'they'- you have to say who that is. Use complete sentences. Read and write more clearly". I also observed wisdom and patience as they dealt with one another through the process. (Field notes, Apr. 11).

Joy concurred with Gloria Goris Stronks who spoke at a Christian School convention about instilling wisdom in students. That meant students would make positive choices knowing that they were God's children. Stronks and Blomberg (1993) elaborate further in *A Vision With a Task* when they wrote:

> To have wisdom means much more than simply knowing things in the abstract. To be wise means to know how to act rightly in specific situations. To act rightly means to respond obediently, to act in conformity to God's will .... If we are truly wise we will have the insight to see all things in terms of their relation to Christ and his service. (p. 130)

"My kids aren't robots," says Joy. She felt that by giving the students opportunities to make choices, they would learn from the result whether or not they had made a wise choice. She also felt "if they don't learn how to make choices in everyday life, how are they going to do it [make choices] in the big things?" She agreed with a fellow teacher whose goal was "to get kids to think creatively, to solve problems and to be independent thinkers." "I think that's what our biggest calling, as Christian school teachers is--to get kids to be independent thinkers," said Joy (Interview, May 1).

In the last interview (July 20) she talked about "making right choices from a biblical point of view." "I did talk about that quite a bit this year. Wise meant making wise choices and wise didn't mean smart ... I think some of them [the students] finally caught it .... You know--Don is wise. There are some intelligent kids in class, but Don is wise." She spoke of Don earlier as "being most at peace with where he is. He doesn't care if he isn't an academic genius, and it doesn't affect how he feels about himself" (Interview, May 8). In relating some of the conflict resolution situations it is evident that there were choices she would like to see. She indicated that one boy was not a bully on his own and showed remorse when dealing with the situation:

> When you come to him and say, 'I heard this is what happened on the playground,' ... The head goes down. He feels bad. He's sorry. He goes

> and apologizes right away. Not Sam. Sam doesn't see that it was wrong. (Interview, May 1)

Joy's desire to have the students develop that understanding of wisdom came through when she related the "passing of fleas" story. As she talked with the children about the incident, "they did feel bad, but I wish they would feel bad without me having to make them feel bad in the first place .... I wish they had the conscience of Jason. Jason says, 'I have to apologize'. I think he had to purge his soul or something" (Interview, May 8).

Joy expressed her delight when students indicated discernment in choosing a story written by a classmate which contained "controlled violence" over one by a fellow student which depicted "violence and no remorse", even though the latter had "describing words, action, [and] a plot that was intriguing" (Interview, July 20). Violence had been a topic of discussion as indicated by Joy's response to a student's writing:

> The teachers really felt that these things [violence] go against what Christ encourages us to be like. Jesus wanted us to look for the good and show people the goodness of God's creation. I don't think he ever meant for us to read and write about evil things and think it was just perfectly fine because then when we have to choose between what's right and wrong or good and evil we might not be able to make a wise choice. The more familiar you get with terror and violence the less able you are to make a good decision about it. Do you kind of understand what I mean?

Issues requiring wisdom came up in the curriculum studies "as they learn about different things in God's creation." Language Arts is a tool used to express how the students feel and Social Studies is a tool where you look at issues where you are going to need a bit of wisdom ...." In the unit on Canada the students faced a number of issues which prompted them to question the actions of those involved. e.g. the explorers interaction with the natives, the establishment of forts and the activities of the fur trade, and the treatment of the native peoples. Rather than taking a judgmental stance, the students were encouraged to situate themselves in that historical time period and decide how they would do things differently and then articulate why they would act in that way. As they studied the physical regions of Canada and talked about the variety of the Canadian landscape, they realized "not one of them could have ever done [created] that" so they could only stand in awe of their Creator.

In their research the students found information on the percentage of people belonging to the different religious groups. They were puzzled why their denomination was not included. They were even more surprised when they found the percentage of people in Alberta who claimed to be Christians. That led to a discussion about how they could do their part in spreading God's Word. Joy related some of her personal anecdotes in relation to sharing her faith, some of which the students thought were "pretty funny". Her goal for the coming year was to have her devotions more oriented toward "the mission aspect" and "what's our job in community outreach. What are we called to do?" She shared with her students that:

> teaching in a Christian school is part of my role [as a Christian], but its not the end of my role. I don't have to quit when I walk out the door. I haven't done my duty for the day and I can't go home and say, 'Ah, no more Christian stuff today.' It continues in the grocery store and the way I am around people. I constantly have to be showing that I am a Christian. People should be able to tell. I plan to talk about that a lot more next year. (Interview, July 20)

In the concluding interview, which occurred after the end of the school year, Joy expresses her hopes for her students. Even though she taught all the subject matter and knew they would do well if they had an Alberta Learning test, she hoped they had learned much more.

> I'm hoping that they've learned how to make good decisions, ... that they learn to be a little happier with themselves, ... that they are proud of some of the things they have done and [I'm] hoping that they feel good about their friends... I'm not hoping that they remember what we talked about .... because I'm sure half of them won't. They won't think of all those explorers. (Interview, July 20)

Striving for "The Best"

Joy's first conversation suggested that she had expectations in the "quality" she "wanted" in students' writing. "This way keeps them driven and excited", "He started to realize that it [his story] had gravity", and "He had excellent description". Knowing that she expected a lot from her students in all areas, Joy commented:

> They [parents] were glad that I expected that much from their kids. They [the students] produced and I expected a lot and they produced and I expected a lot more and that was great .... I was trying to build something; to get those kids to strive for excellence, not to just be happy with some little report on Canada, but really work on it. (Interview, Apr. 24)

In a later interview the reason for her expectation of quality on the part of her students and herself became apparent when she emphatically stated:

> God never called us to be mediocre. God never called us to be just average. He never called us just to be an OK Christian school. NEVER! And I just don't understand people who think it's OK to be mediocre. And I firmly believe God called us to be THE BEST that we can be. (Interview, July 20)

Later when discussing an incident where there had been inappropriate behavior by her students and others at an assembly, she voiced her frustration by saying, "They see poor behavior that is never checked and that's the thing about mediocre and excellent."

Guidelines and Encouragement

To insure quality work from the students, Joy gave specific directions as to how the assignments were to be completed e.g. "Remember to underline the title and list the author", "Now listen because I don't want to say it 17 times .... Each group gets one question. Your answer must reflect your question ....Come and get your question and only once I've given all the questions, you may get up to go to your area.", and "What I'm looking for is: imagination, instructions, and information from the book. The game goes in a folder. Other students will evaluate how well the game is made, if the instructions are explained well and if it goes with the book." When the students had shown inappropriate behavior they were to write a letter of apology which was "honest, from the heart, neat, free of spelling errors and using proper grammar" (Field notes, Apr. 17). Following a discussion on the verse - A gentle answer turns way wrath and a harsh word stirs up anger (Proverbs 15:1), the students were to write two conversations to illustrate the verse. Predicting the possibilities, Joy added, "I don't want it silly or the use of useless language" (Field notes, May 1). At other times she added humor with remarks such as, "If it's not neat, I'm going to be a grumpy old woman" (Field notes, Apr. 9).

It was evident that the structure given helped the students focus on their tasks. An editing criteria was provided for each piece of writing. A check mark was beside each item if it was found in the writing. The criteria included:

Did the writer edit for capitals?

Did the writer edit for punctuation?

> Did the writer edit for spelling?
>
> Did the writer edit for run on sentences?
>
> Did the writer use a lot of describing words and detail?
>
> Additional comments: A sample of comments in addition to those written on the body of the writing included, "awkward sentences, fragments that need linking, need a bit more work on transitions and didn't end. Is there a Part II" (student writing folder)?

The students were aware of what they had to do and concentrated on completing their assignments.

Once the students started their tasks Joy circulated making comments, asking questions, giving suggestions or redirecting the students. After looking at what one student wrote, she responded good-naturedly to the student's earlier statement that he didn't know anything about the subject, "That's awfully long for someone who doesn't know anything"(Field notes, Apr. 9). Bending down beside the desk of someone having trouble getting started she asked, "What's the first step you would do?" and continued with him until he was able to put his ideas down on paper. "OK, can I see what you guys wrote?" she asked a group of boys as they tried to summarize a rather difficult passage. When a student asked for affirmation, Joy told him, "Instead of using 'said' all the time, you can use 'I told him that ...' and you won't have to use quotation marks all the time" (Field notes, Apr. 10). As she checked the progress of student writing, guidelines were established if progress was not being made. When she passed by a student who had an aide assisting her, Joy commented, "Good, keep going" (Field notes, Apr. 9).

Joy challenged the students and encouraged them to extend themselves by using the expression "brain stretching" as in the comment, "She did her own brain stretching; now you do your own" (Field notes, Apr. 29). When a passage was read that was difficult, she often explained it in language that the students could understand. She encouraged them to predict or discuss what they might do in the same situation. At times she warned them that the assignment was complicated, difficult, or "a real hum chucker" (Field notes, May 1). In those situations she completed a similar assignment using the board or overhead and in addition offered assistance as needed. At times a sample of student's work projected on the overhead served as a guide, instruction or encouragement. Having the students work in groups was also a strategy used. At one point Ann wanted to work with me rather than with the rest of her group, but Joy indicated she should join the group. Interestingly, Ann kept up with the group and felt good about her participation. When introducing a book she had read, Joy said that *Adam and Eve and Pinch Me* was a hard book to read, but it was very compelling. "It's a 'Mitchell' book," quipped one of the students, referring to someone he considered a capable reader. The response: "I think anyone could read it if they take the time" (Field notes, May 9).

Some students needed more help than did others in knowing what had to be completed to meet the requirements of an assignment or unit. At times they asked fellow students. Sometimes they asked Joy. If she saw that they were behind and needed encouragement, she used the expression "burner power" as in "You better get the burner power going, guys" (Field notes, Apr. 10). The students knew this meant they had to stay on task to complete the assignment within the time frame or homework may be the result.

Organizers

There were organizers in place to facilitate an ease of flow of activities in the classroom. Assignments were color coded. Other means of organizing included checklists for homework, completed assignments, reading records and most any task the students were called to do. A chart which Joy completed indicated students' reading progress. To track students' writing, the "status of the class" was used. To insure that students edited their writing, both the name of the author and that of the person who peer edited appeared on the required piece of writing. Individual student files were available for completed writing, and another for returned tests which had been signed by parents. Students were expected to put papers in the proper place in binders so that their work could be easily found. They were given constant reminders of this. Students were also made aware of time limits on their assignments, whether it was two minutes, two days or two weeks. Advanced notice was given so that the class knew what they would be working on in the near future. e.g. "This is your last morning for research so you have to be finished at 9:30, at which time I'll show you how to do an outline" (video, May 13). It was obvious that Joy's organization helped the class run efficiently and effectively.

Re-direction for Students

Re-direction appeared to be part of the flow of the classroom. Sometimes just the mention of a name was enough to remind the student to return to the task. At other times and for specific students, more was required. e.g. "I didn't need a comment like that." "I'm getting a little tired of all the extra attention you are trying to attract over there." "In your desk. Do not give in to their persuasion"(Field notes Apr. 9). When Joy indicated she was going the read the daily news, a school bulletin, Rusty made a comment to which she replied, "Excuse me, Rusty. Did I ask you to make a comment?" Later she declared, "Rusty, I don't want to say that name again" (Field notes, Apr. 9). In at least one instance when her teaching was interrupted by a student's talking, she spoke directly to him, "Excuse me and excuse me" (video, May 13).

There were consequences for inappropriate behavior; some that were of Joy's own making and others that tied into the school's demerit system. When two boys did not change their behavior after being spoken to, Joy said, "Step outside the door - one on either side." Upon completing the explanation to the class, she talked to the boys in the hall and shortly thereafter they returned to their work (Field notes, May 9). Three times of encouraging Rusty to write did not produce results. Eventually Joy said, "Rusty, the next step is out the door so you can concentrate a bit better (Field notes, May 2). Three students were given "lots of warnings - very well supported" and therefore had to write their names on the board. A student told me that after three behavior demerits the student would receive a suspension. Although the student started with a clean slate each month, they were aware of the consequences.

Reaching Goals

Parents and colleagues commented on how well Joy's students did. At the same time that Joy said she couldn't put it into words why this was so, she said:

> It's so important to me not to have kids flunk.... I expect them to study and they know they have to study and I tell them that all the time. Before a test, I tell them, 'You can't just walk in and can't just write that test and expect to do well. And my expectation is that that mark is over 60%, and if it's not over 60%, you know you have to re-do.'

She continued later in the conversation:

> When I had a test within the first week and I went over how you study, what do you do to study, and I explained that I'm not satisfied with the mark below 60 because that means you don't really know it [the material], and it's sort of getting by. And what I want is that you know it, and if you're over 60 that means you have a good feel for it. I said, 'I want you to at least have a good understanding of it. Anything under 60--you really don't get it yet and we're going to have to work on it more'.

> And they don't want to work on it more so they make sure they get over 60. (Interview, Apr. 24)

Joy was aware that it took a while for the students to adjust to the expectation, but once "they were used to what I expected of them and they knew that when I said it was time to work , it was time to work. And they knew that if I said it was going to be due tomorrow, it was going to be due tomorrow and they became much more accountable," The homework check was built in and one student prepared to stay in at recess admitted, "I don't have it done and I have to finish it." According to Joy, students had said, "She's gonna find out anyway." when one of them had not completed homework. (Interview, Apr. 24)

"I think that's part of accountability." said Joy. "That's all part of stewardship of God's creation and ... these kids have to understand that they're not just here because they're here, but that they're here to serve, like all of us are here to serve. That's what I'm trying to get them to realize that they have responsibilities and they have to learn to carry out those responsibilities so that they can serve" (Interview, Apr. 24).

Her expectation involving parental support for students doing home work was evident in the statement, "What I'm trying to get them [students] to do is to have quality and good stuff, and good stuff takes work, you know, and it's not just the function of school. It takes some extra effort at home too" (Interview, Apr. 24). When Joy realized that the tasks given to the students were challenging, she made provision for the extra support that the students needed. The centers on the explorers of Canada proved to be difficult for a previous class, so five parents worked with Joy and the students three or four times a week, rotating with the different groups of students so that everyone of the students "made it through the centers and nobody flunked them" (Interview, Apr. 24).

Joy's Personal Best

Joy also modeled striving to do her best. There was always an aura that Joy was well prepared for teaching. The room was organized in much the same way she expected the students space and binders to be organized. She read with great expression and the students enjoyed listening to her and often begged her to read more. At one time she began reading with so much expression that one of the students jumped and said, "You scared me." Joy also modeled reading for the children in that she read many of the books the students read. She bought books, read them and then introduced them to the class. Newbery winners and other award winning books were noted. Because she read the books and knew the types of books particular students enjoyed, she was able to say, "You'll like this book." One time of modeling writing stands out because the students noticed that their teacher had to edit her writing just as they did. They had been given a specific time period in which to write. Joy wrote at the same time and on the same topic as did the students. When she read what she had written both she and the students noticed that a part of it had to be re-worded.

There were other situations which speak of Joy trying to do "her best". She tried to live up to her promises. Having forgotten the science tests at school, she apologized and tried to complete the marking of them during the next school day. When the students earned a promised couch as a reward, it became part of the classroom furniture. Even though she taught the students a catchy "jeopardy" tune for a new blessing before lunch, she reminded them that it was a blessing, and had them sing it again when it wasn't sung "appropriately" (Field notes, Apr. 2, 25). The elementary assembly led by the grade five class was an example of giving one's best. It was well organized, with participation by the grade five students reading original Psalms, either solo or as responsive readings. The students were prepared for their audience and Joy gave instructions to the elementary students so the whole assembly was a joyful praise to God. The "Elementary Sing" proceeded as follows:

Grade 5 read a Psalm and then everyone sang.

Song: Sing Unto the Lord a New Song (Echo sing and then all together)

Don's Psalm of Praise:

Grade 2, 4, 6: Praise the Lord!

Grade 1, 3, 5: He who gives us food.

Grade 2, 4, 6: Ruler of all the earth and heavens,

Grade 1, 3, 5: You make us your sheep and you watch over us like a shepherd.

Grade 2, 4, 6: You don't make us kill, nor hurt or steal,

Grade 1, 3, 5: but listen to us and give us all we need.

Grade 2, 4, 6: You help us when we are sick and you keep us healthy.

Grade 1, 3, 5: You made us who we are, but yet you made us perfect.

Grade 2, 4, 6: You are boundless in love.

Grade 1, 3, 5: Your heart is as big as the earth.

All: You know what's good for us and you save us from evil.
Praise the Lord!

Grade 2 students performed song using instruments.

Rusty read his Psalm.

Song: I Will Sing Unto The Lord

(Instructions given as to when to clap and how to clap).

Graeme read his Psalm.

Song: O God You Are My God.

Psalm written by Janey (on overhead)

(Instructions given including a reminder that this was praise to God).

Prayer led by Joy.

Song: Hallelujah.

(Joy predicted what might happen with this song and therefore gave instructions).

Sang Happy Birthday to the principal. (Field notes, May 7)

Professional Growth

During the action research project with the staff, Joy had expressed her frustration with the spelling program at the school. I noticed when I was in the classroom that a different approach was being used than the one she had referred to earlier. She related how that discussion had stimulated her thinking about improving the program and led to a search for new resources. "You can't be loosey-goosey about spelling .... I believe you have to teach rules ... and work with them." Consequently she "started the spelling workshop centers and phonics where they [the students] can choose and there's some fun things" (Interview, May 8).

We talked about being a professional "born" teacher. Joy indicated that teaching was "her whole being" because even when she was at stitching camp she picked up ideas for teaching. To give definition to professional teachers she referred to the teachers from her former school who had a "passion for teaching and were way ahead in their understanding of teaching. When they went to workshops, they realized they were already doing that which the workshop leader was presenting" (Journal, Apr. 10).

Caring

Having observed how Joy had been meeting the individual needs and learning styles of various students, I related how Nell Noddings (1988) had suggested that a teacher stay with the students for no less than three years. Upon knowing the children well, the teacher can teach to accommodate the needs. It appears that in the system most commonly used today, it is just when a teacher really gets to know the student, and the student knows the teacher, that the structure is pulled out from under the student. The student has to move on to another teacher. Teachers have to get to know the students again in a real caring way in order to meet their individual needs. To this Joy responded:

> And that caring thing - I think that's what also comes out in the way I teach, what I teach, why I teach when I teach. It's because you care about the kids ... it's because you care so much for them, and you want them to have success and you want them to feel good about themselves and you want them to do well and you want them to write good stuff. That's why I do what I do. I want so much for them, like I want them to really bloom and blossom and use their gifts and just get them to see their gifts and use them and **go** [her emphasis] for it. (Interview, April 24)

Caring for Individuals to Reach Academic Potential

Joy's caring that the individual reached his or her academic potential came to expression as I related my interaction with Rusty. As we were editing Part 2 of Rusty's story I was having trouble understanding it. Rusty excitedly read Part one of his "Manure Barn" story. He showed great pride and feeling as he read his completed work. I learned from Joy that Rusty had little pride in himself and in his writing ability when he came into grade five. He was "afraid of everything" but rather than admitting this, acted out the "tough guy" role. By concentrating on his good ideas, rather on his short comings in the mechanics of writing, Joy encouraged Rusty to see that he was capable and enabled him to gain pride in himself and his abilities. At this point he was capable of writing a five page story whereas when he began with her, he wrote five sentences. Although Rusty was often redirected during class time, many times with one line comments, my journal notes indicated, "She doesn't show harshness to the children"(Journal, Apr. 23). Another journal entry also records the same sentiment as I had a discussion with Joy. I had told Joy how I had noticed Rusty learned well from verbal interaction. I was impressed with the positive interaction between Joy and Rusty and how I observed her giving him opportunities to express what he learned verbally (Journal, Apr. 10). It is apparent that she agrees with Draper (2000) who writes, "Success always worked better than failure. Children who feel successful will try again tomorrow. Children who feel like failures will give up, and tomorrow they will be discipline problems" (p. 47).

At the same time we had talked about Ann's growth. Ann, an adopted child, came to grade five from a non-English speaking country with a half year of schooling. She initially required one-to-one interaction much of the time. She had an aide part of the time. It was obvious by the inappropriateness of some of her interruptions that she was still learning school culture. At times, especially during whole class teaching, Joy would motion with her hand that Ann was not to interrupt. Sometimes she tried to accommodate her by answering her questions as she worked with another student. At other times she encouraged Ann to take steps to greater independence. Joy expressed satisfaction in helping Ann grow to this point in her learning.

Joy also encouraged Janey to reach for her goal in life; that of being a writer. "She is a fantastic writer but her sentence structure is so poor. She chooses the funniest ways to put a sentence together." Because the editing process is laborious, Joy set a five page limit to Janey's stories. Anthony was also an excellent writer who Joy could envision being an author. Joy figured out that he was an auditory learner and therefore has difficulty in math. She explains much of math using the chalkboard, and knew that following each whole class math instruction she had to work with him individually until he indicated an understanding of the concept. Recognizing and working with the various abilities of the students reaffirmed what Joy said in conversation:

> Society has taught them they have to be equal in intelligence, abilities, looks .... That's something we really have to work on in the schools. Equal means that God loves you for you .... It doesn't mean he's going to make you just as talented as the Graeme in the class, but it means he loves you for you. He may well have given Graeme a whole lot more talents than he gave you... but that doesn't mean God loves them any less.

In her wonderfully humorous way she continued by painting a word picture of the students with differing gifts, competing at the Klondike relay games:

> They are having such a good time. God did not create us to be equal! Some of those kids run like birds and some of those kids run like turtles - knees in, elbows clunking everywhere [laughter] and we're not equal in that respect.. That's OK. I think they [the students] have come to see that that's OK .... They come in eighth and they come across the finish line and they are beaming! They are so proud of themselves and it didn't matter that they were like a turtle .... They did it, they got out there and they used their abilities. (Interview, May 8)

Care to Reach Social, Emotional and Spiritual Goals

The atmosphere in the classroom showed that Joy's care for the children went beyond meeting their academic needs. There was a sense of comfort in the classroom. Joy had fun with her students, and they with her. Her infectious laughter could be heard often. She laughed at her own mistakes and shared jokes with the students. She let the students know what new crafts she learned, as well as what "strange things" she had for lunch. The rock bottom fundamental of "Love God above all and your neighbor as yourself" (Mark 12: 30, 31) was at the center of the life of the classroom. The Bible states that love casts out fear and that appeared to be true in Joy's classroom. Van Dyk (1997) in his *Letter to Lisa* encourages a young teacher to create this type of classroom atmosphere.

Joy realized that she had to help her students learn that "You're not smart if you're not wise enough to be kind," Several instances indicated that Chris was given the space to grow as a person. I noticed that the one group with which I had been working was not as far advanced as the others, but Joy was not concerned. She indicated the reason in an interview. She felt there was a need for the group of students to carry on a discussion and come to a greater understanding as to why Chris was not accepted. She responded:

> Chris has a lot of trouble just being personally accepted. So they [the students] were having a discussion with Chris and Chris wanted the discussion to happen. So I came over and said, 'Are you sure Chris wants you to be talking about this?' And he said, 'Ya, ya, ya, I want to know.' And they were saying, 'What is wrong with Chris? Why do people think the way they think about Chris?' Like why do they think he's kind of strange and stuff like that and they had a really [good discussion]; it was neat. I just stood back and listened to them talk about that and they all came to the conclusion that Chris wasn't any different and maybe it was things they were doing that would make him different. And Jonathan said, Ya, when so and so did this to Chris, this is what he did and Chris said, 'I did that because I was really mad', and it was neat for them just to talk about that. They were way behind but I thought

> Chris needed this. Chris needs this-to know he's OK. (Interview, Apr. 24)

In the third interview Joy talked quite passionately about wanting her students to know that they were OK. "God loves them just the way they are," she stated and then told how a big happy face with sun glasses and the words, "Smile, God Loves You Just The Way You Are," greets the students in September and is reinforced in February with the display, "God Loves You Today, Just As Much As He Does On Valentine's Day." With this she wanted the students:

> to understand that it doesn't matter who they are, what they look like. It doesn't matter if they are Chris, or if eight million people think you're weird and don't necessarily like you and [you are] worried that other people might think that you are friends with Chris, so they don't want to be friends with you. But besides all that, God still loves you. You know that is probably one of the only hopes that Chris has to hold on to. (Interview, May 8)

It was evident she had a real concern for Chris because earlier in the interview she told the story of how Ann had been "passing Chris fleas" and upon stopping them Joy explained, "I had my typical fit and exploded, 'What's that? Ridiculous!'" When she asked Chris how he felt he couldn't respond but indicated with his down-turned thumb. Her response in trying to understand this was that Ann "must have such a tough outer shell ... that she must have to hurt to make up for her hurt somehow." In referring to another incident which involved Rusty and Quinton spreading a rumor, she spoke of the importance of a reciprocal loving relationship:

> If you want to be able to talk to kids and you want to be able to have them pay attention to what you are saying, if you want them to get

> something out of it, you have to be [pause] in their hearts .... They have to love you to be willing to listen to you. Quinton and Rusty for their whole big situation, ... had to be able to love me and me to love them in order for them to know that we could talk in this way, and know that when I told Quinton that the things he was saying were totally inappropriate, that he took that to heart and just didn't say, 'Ah that's some old fuddy-duddy who doesn't know anything'. (Interview, May 8)

Joy believed that the same type of rapport that she had with her students was also evident when she coached the junior high volleyball team. They wanted to discuss issues with which they were struggling. While she was available to them and ready to listen to them, they were willing to hear her say, "Maybe that's not the best way to do it." When asked what she meant when she said she had to give good answers while discussing with them, she responded:

> Where you re-direct them into good and upright thinking. What is the thinking we are trying to model from our school? What is the thinking that your [students'] parents are hoping you will have? What's the kind of thinking you want to reflect in the community?... How does it tie in with you being a Christian? ... If it is right and it is good and you are at peace with God doing it, then stand for what you believe in.

Although she realized her students were not dealing with the same issues as were the junior high school students, she wanted them to have a good sense of who they were because they faced issues in the classroom and on the playground which could erode their self esteem. She tried to get students to think "it is OK to be an individual" and hoped that she exemplifies that in her own actions. Her individuality was evident in the clothes she wore and in the food she took for her lunch. When a student told her that her clothes did not match, she responded, "That's OK. I wear it for me." She continued:

> You have to be happy for yourself and that's what I believe God really wants us to be--happy with who you are ... Be at peace where you are .... That's something I really try to get across to my kids. Just through me and what I do, I try to show that's it's OK to be you and it's OK to be different; strange in some things. (Interview, May 8)

Making Choices

In Learning Activities

Joy's first conversation gave several glimpses that a variety of learning activities was important. "I think kids need variation", "I try to make a lot of variety in what I offer them", "I try to offer them a unit where they can work at their own pace and do their own things and make their own choices", and "... they also get the chance to do their own independent writing" indicating that offering a variety of activities where students could make choices was important to her (Interview, Apr. 24).

Each month the students, in consultation with Joy, set their own reading goals. They had a wide choice of books and at the end of the month Joy checked if their goals had been met. They wrote a response letter to Joy about the book and she responded by writing in their response journal. Their reading records, were another way of responding to the books they had read. At the beginning of the year the students were given a list of over twenty ways in which they could show that they had read a book and had knowledge and understanding of the book. The students had choice as to the book, the number of pages read, the responses to the book and often to the time in which they could work on the activity. Joy would give them a choice e.g. "Finish your Population Center and then you have three choices: Readers Workshop, Writers Workshop or *Castle in the Attic* game" (Field notes, May 7).

Choices were offered in other areas as well. Both their Castlemania center and their centers on Canada offered activities that presented a choice in how they wished to learn the content from both units. Students appeared to enjoy options such as writing poetry or doing crossword puzzles, and didn't seem to be at a loss as to what to do. After watching a demonstration of an experiment which tested surface tension, the students experimented on their own but were given a choice as to which liquids to use in their experiment. Several students did experiments at home and eagerly reported their results to Joy. Students also chose the spelling words they wanted to learn. Once they had written the errors from their pretest, they completed their list with words of their choice. The Spelling Center offered a number of activities which helped them study these words. One of the most challenging was having "as many describing words as they can using their spelling words without having a run-on sentence" (Interview, May 8).

Joy also allowed choices for certain students who found the whole class instruction too challenging. Ann, for instance, chose to work with Mrs. B. on another book because *Castle in the Attic* was too difficult for her to understand. When given the choice, she also chose to work on a modified unit on Canada, as she had been in Canada for less than two years and her school attendance had been sporadic prior to coming to Canada.

There were times when the students were given a choice with whom they worked and times when "The Biased Pig" determined who was in their group. Popsicle sticks indicating the students' names were drawn from the "biased pig" cup. Usually four students composed a group but if Joy saw an imbalance in the composition of the group, another person was added to the group. When the grade five students worked with the grade two students, either the grade five or the grade two students could chose a partner. Because partner work was done so often in the grade five classroom, the process of picking partners took very little time.

In Behavior

When a student chose to do something that was not beneficial to the learning process or to a positive classroom atmosphere, Joy would often say, "That was not a wise choice". That was the case when Rusty said he lost his summary or when Joe responded, "I threw them out." after Joy indicated that a test had to be corrected and returned with a parent's signature by Friday. When Joe decided to sharpen his pencil rather than do the "Mad Minute" and thereby caused the rest of the class to wait, Joy remarked, "Joe, I think you are making a very poor choice." Having taken almost an hour to work through a difficult situation where two boys had spread a rumor about another, Joy concluded, "That was the worst choice you could have made for a joke" (Interview, May 1).

An emphasis on choice as a whole group, or a small group, was evident in the use of the "Dot" system. It appeared to work very effectively and the group monitored one another. Occasions when the dot was moved up were: when the students waited quietly until all the groups had finished their assignment (Field notes, Apr. 25), when all the students were reading quietly as expected (Field notes, Apr. 24), or when there was "good behavior during novel studies" (Field notes, Apr. 3). If Joy threatened to move the dot back because some students were talking when they were "under the dome of silence" during writers' workshop, the students negotiated and put words into action (Field notes, Apr. 23). They cleaned up and got ready for prayer quickly when Joy said, "If I have to wait too long, I might have to move the beloved dot" (Field notes, Apr. 9). I asked Joy to tell me about the "Dot system":

> It always works really well at the beginning of the year, as a motivator ... Sometimes I think kids have to work towards things and I don't make them huge things .... They had to get the dot from the bottom person on that desk board, [There was a picture of a desk for each of the students placed in rows on the side bulletin board], up to the top, and when they got it to the top I was going to bring them the couch.

Explaining what the students had to do she continued:

> If I walked in from recess and they were all in their desks, I moved the dot. And if I had to go to the bathroom, and I came back and they were all quietly working, I moved the dot. If 'so and so' had helped 'so and so' with something I moved the dot.

In response to whether or not the guidelines were established ahead of time she said:

> No, I didn't say a word. They just caught on. I'd move the dot for something and they'd all clue in, and they'd go, 'That's something we should be doing'. If they were all reading very quietly during reader's workshop and nobody was talking, I'd move up the dot .... If I came in and they were all over the place at recess time and they were being loud and obnoxious, I'd move the dot back .... Sometimes I did it for individual behavior too. When I saw a group working together very well, then I would move the dot up, and I'd say to them, 'I can move the dot up another whole dot if I see all four groups working like this'. And that's how I used the dot to get what I was looking for rather than having to say [rules] over and over again.

Joy's hope was that "some of the kids ... gain their own sense of structure." Believing that she had provided structure for them in the way she set up activities, she hoped "they're learning how to structure themselves in homework ..., in studying, everything, like take responsibilities for yourself, be your own boss sort of thing" (Interview, May 1).

Serving in Community

Within the Classroom

"I have done so much group work this year because I have so many kids in this class that couldn't function by themselves." commented Joy. It was obvious from the first day of my visit that students were expected to talk with each other, to learn from each other and with each other. Joy talked about the reason for their learning together by the following:

> They have idea conferences. They get ideas from one another. They have to check with their friend if they think it's OK. And it's probably perfectly fine, or it might have not been, but they just need that extra bit of reassurance (Interview, Apr. 24).

The students worked in some group arrangement everyday that I was in the class. Frequently group work occurred more than once per day.

Our Apr. 24 conversation included talk about students serving one another. Even their completed work was viewed in terms of service. "The students were made aware that they didn't write a letter in their response journal to get a 10, but [so] that others could read it and benefit from it." said Joy. In a very practical way they were also serving one another as they helped each other in their learning. "Don, What are you doing to help your group get done?" and "Ann, are you doing OK? Do you need some help from Kathy?" were verbal expressions of serving (Field notes, April 10 & 11). Students quizzed each other preparing for a test, gave each other spelling tests and corrected them; communally did assignments from their Canada centers, summarized Bible passages, learned memory work, brainstormed to create a game, learned geography, improvised a story, conducted reading or writing conferences, or completed assignments of various kinds. Joy's comments on the "brain power" of working together were often heard. "Four brains are better than one", "You have two other people to check with. Remember, three brains are better than one" In asking Max to work with Chris, Joy continued, "Two brains are better than one."

Along with assignments, directives were given so that the groups worked well together: "Talk to your whole group before you come and ask me." "You have to have consensus in your group." "Leave the pillows in the corner." "You draw and your partner has twenty second to guess." "Don't go ahead until everyone has the answer down". Some took their own initiative. One group was playing "teacher" with the girls being the teacher and explaining procedures step by step. The boys were also enjoying their "student" role (Field notes, Apr. 24). Time limits were also given in advance.

The year end testing used by Alberta Learning was a source of frustration to Joy because she saw the methodology as contrary to "the philosophy of our Christian school." The communal aspect of learning is taken away and they [Alberta Learning] "just leave them standing by themselves." She was concerned for the students who needed others to encourage them in their writing. A number of students, like Rusty, required the assurance that their ideas were good. They may have been able to tell the story orally, but needed help to write it. Joy felt initially students should not have to worry about the constraint of spelling. The rhythm of writing on their own, consulting with someone and then writing on their own again gave them the reassurance that they could be writers and that their ideas were worthy of written expression. Peer editing helped them learn the mechanics of writing. These students would not successfully complete a piece of writing in the time allotted by the Alberta

Learning testing and therefore would not give an accurate picture of their capabilities or feel good about their finished product.

> The point is to be a team... when they do them (learning activities) by themselves they stand alone and when they work with a group they can feel good about what they're learning.... This way the whole group is responsible that everyone in that group [is learning]. (Interview, Apr. 24)

A sense of community pertained to what they said as well as to what they did. "I really wanted to make the point with them. You're not here by yourself. You're here with the whole group and you have to think about what you say" (Interview, July 20). Joy gave an example of what she meant by this. Three of the students had initiated a story writing contest, complete with poster and prizes. The students were to vote on the entries and the points were tallied. After one of the entries was read, one the students, suspecting it was Chris' story, responded, "I don't get it. It doesn't make any sense to me." With that the tone of the class changed and the students no longer concentrated on the quality of the story, but rather on the author. Joy talked with the student explaining that she felt he was thinking only of himself, instead of the whole class or the author of the story. Another exchange occurred on April 10:

> Don: What's that word for gymnastics?
>
> Joy: Acrobat.
>
> Don: That's an easy one to sound out.
>
> Tom made a comment under his breath but Joy heard it.
>
> Joy: Tom, we don't need any peanut gallery comments. What might be easy for you, may not be easy for someone else.

Following the reprimand after the incident where her class laughed at other performers in the elementary assembly, Joy saw a change in the grade five students' behavior. They began to remind each other that they were to be an example, not only within their own classroom but also with the other students in the school.

Being an example became an important focus when the grade five students worked with the grade two students in the reading program. To create a greater sense of school community, the school had for many years partnered the lower elementary classes with the upper elementary classes. The children read and wrote together for one class period a week, under the direction of one or both of the teachers. The grade five students were given clear directions so they felt confident in leading the grade two students. "I'm counting on you to help the grade twos," said Joy. During the weeks I was at the school, the grade five and grade two partners read, figured out the plot of the story, made a summary of the story and made books together. Joy emphasized that even though students in her class might find the story boring or not to their liking, they were to be responsible and show "a right example" because the grade two students were looking to them as to how to read and write (Field notes, Apr. 29, May 6; Interview, July 20).

Operating within the context of the community, the students also were given opportunity to develop in leadership roles. As mentioned earlier some took the role of being a teacher in their group. Others initiated and ran a writing contest. They also had opportunity to write a play of their own which was, according to Joy, "the biggest day in their lives" (Interview, Apr. 24). They continually took leadership roles as they operated within their learning groups.

With Parents

Joy is very aware that the task of educating children was shared with parents. Parents assisted in the classroom and also accompanied the class on a field trip. When some parents questioned the amount of homework expected of their child, Joy invited them to spend a day in the classroom, observing their child and the class as a whole. As a result parents had a greater understanding of their child's way of learning within the classroom setting and were open to assisting with homework. Parents were made aware of their children's progress on a continual basis as parents were requested to sign their children's tests before they were returned to school. Once a week the students wrote a letter to their parents indicating what they had done in school. The parents were encouraged to respond by writing in the student's journal, which was then returned to school. One of the responses from a parent read, "I have been reading the Psalms lately too. Yesterday I read Psalm 139. It ties in with your unit on self-esteem. Maybe you would like to read it?"

When Joy noticed that Gordon consistently had a difficult time admitting that he was at fault, she eventually contacted his parents. She indicated that she had talked many times to Gordon about making excuses, but eventually he had to take responsibility for his actions. Joy expressed pleasure relating that the result was Gordon giving a knowing, "Oh yah," when she now called his name to bring attention to a similar situation.

It appeared that Joy had far more contact with Rusty's parents than she had with other parents. She was also aware of the varied repercussions that her contact with parents had on the students. She knew that Rusty had "two really firm parents who didn't do the things he did" and saw Rusty develop strategies which he thought would avoid consequences of incomplete homework. Weighing the end result, she decided "You have to learn, Bud" and gave him a note to take to his parents. A signed returned note would indicate the parents were aware of the situation. No note returned the first day. No note returned the second day. Meeting his mom in the hall at recess the following day, Joy talked about the incident. As expected, Rusty's consequences at home were far more stringent than if he had originally informed his parents. Joy trusted his parents and agonized with them as together they tried to encourage Rusty. At the same time she reminded herself of how far "he's come" since the beginning of the year.

As mentioned earlier, Joy honored what the parents believed and encouraged the junior high school students she coached, to think beyond themselves to what their parents valued. Knowing that they shared a belief in God and his Word, she tried to help them recognize the common ground. Because of shared values of the school society, Joy expected parents to uphold and support teachers. "We need to build each other up," she asserts. She believed it was more important for the school society to think of ways it could improve the school rather than to criticize it (Interview, July 20).

Beyond the Classroom

The sense of community extended beyond that of the classroom. As Joy led the class in devotion on April 3, they participated in an activity similar to what she had done with the staff. The visual image, symbolizing hope in Jesus Christ, was that of the cross. Affixed to each end was a label: Families, City, Canada and World. Each group of students picked a label and were encouraged to talk about and then finish the sentence starter, "We hope ____ for families" or whatever their label indicated. After a sentence was composed for each member of the group, the students were invited to pray for families, their city, Canada or the world, depending on the label received. Joy both opened and closed the prayer, with students saying their prayer in between.

When the class studied Canada and how Canadians made decisions regarding changes and adaptations in Canadian life and life styles, they discussed what kinds of choices Christians should be making about the world. Topics examined included: how we use our land, how we use our resources and to whom we are selling them. As Joy indicated, the students studied a lot of unit content before they could start pulling things together in this manner (Interview, July 20).

The staff discussion on the mission statement led them to ask the question, "What are the ways we could reach out in the community? How could our school be more effective in the community?" (Interview, July 20). The realization by the students of the small percentage of the population of Canada who were Christians, led to a discussions as to how they could be a witness within their community (Interview, July 20).

The School's Mission Statement

At one point in our conversation Joy said, "And it all came out in our mission statement." Taking the opportunity I asked what the mission statement was. Almost apologetically Joy admitted she didn't know it word for word. That was understandable as the staff had been going through a process of re-working the mission statement. She attempted to articulate its' essence in the following:

> We talked about what we want kids to learn about being care takers of creation through the education [that they receive] and working together with parents and teachers in the community ... It wasn't that they [the students] come out just knowing what their social, science and art was, but it was more that they be prepared to face choices and challenges that they would make as Christians (Interview, July 20).

Summary

The participation in Joy's classroom as well as the data gained from the experience gave a picture of who Joy was and what was important to her teaching and in her life. Analyzing the data revealed a number of themes. It was important to Joy that she as well as her students, were always striving to do "the best"; to aim for excellence. To do so, both she and her students, had to make wise choices. Joy was very aware, but she also wanted her students to be aware that they were living and learning within the context of community; classroom, parental and greater community. It was obvious that Joy's teaching and living was rooted in her faith in God and her desire to follow God's Word.

Chapter V

CASE STUDY # 2: CAROL

Introduction

As mentioned in the previous chapter the purpose of this study was twofold: to explore how the vision of the school influenced the practice of the teacher and secondly, to explore the relationship between the personal vision of the teacher and the collective vision of the school. This chapter will indicate what I found to be Carol's personal vision as I worked with her in her grade one classroom. This chapter concludes with Carol's understanding of the school's collective vision.

As I came into the grade one class my introduction to the students was made briefly and Carol then continued on with her lesson on folk tales. It was not unusual for the class to have guests because volunteers were a regular part of their learning environment. The children were seated on the carpet in front of Carol as she sat on a small chair holding a book; a book which was the focus of her teaching.

The bulletin board on the wall in the corner where the class sat featured a collage of pictures. The large letters above it read, "One Family Under the Same Sky". Beside the large bulletin board was a smaller one of the current calendar month and a sentence beginning with an interchangeable number blank indicating the number of days which had already passed in the month. Below the bulletin board was a number line showing the number of days the children had been in school. One number was crossed off for each school day. Another small bulletin board showed thermometers and indicators for the type of weather for the day. A chalk board was at the front of the room. Coat hooks with a cubbyhole above for each child, lined the back of the room. A sink was in the back corner. Along the one wall was a shelf filled with children's books and teacher resources. Along the opposite wall were shelves containing student resources; books, manipulatives, paper, tools students would use, and labeled tin cans holding any number of interesting treasures. The tables at which the eighteen, and later nineteen students sat, were in the central part of the room. Three or four children sat at each table. Carol's desk was about four feet from the nearest desk, but also in the central part of the room. The children could approach her desk from any side. A large wooden chest containing wooden shapes, a small chalkboard easel, a chart stand and a word chart stand occupied space between the desks and the perimeter of the room. Several small tables against the available wall or shelf space served as work or center areas. One such area contained a tape recorder. Students moved easily about the room working at the tables, on the rug, on the floor, and sometimes under Carol's desk. It was a colorful, neat environment which invited learning.

As the students sat attentively on the rug, involved in a discussion about folk tales it was apparent they already had a background in this as they were encouraged to use literary language such as "character", "setting", and "problem in the story". They "read" the illustrations, and later followed along as Carol pointed to the words as she read them. "Don't interrupt me any more", or "I'm not going to pick people who put hands in my face and make noise", gave an indication of what kind of behavior she expected in a teaching/learning situation. As I became a part of this class for the next month and a half, a number of themes emerged which indicated her personal vision of teaching. Foundational to the other themes was her Christian belief system which gave direction to her teaching practice. These themes included: making learning exciting, possessing and displaying pedagogical insight, being well planned, respecting the child, and operating in a community.

Themes

Her Christian Belief System

When asked, "What makes you teach what you do?", Carol's response was, "I guess we are governed by the government .... I guess that's our first, well, I don't know if it's your first, but it's--you have to do it." Using the family unit as an example she started to explain how she began her unit plan. She began with the Alberta Learning Program of Studies and the required topics including the concepts and terminology. She indicated that she extended the topics because of her Christian focus. Like Greene (1998) who states that creation is the material for the curriculum in any school, Carol explained:

> We are teaching God's creation. In everything we're teaching [it] centers around God and what He plans for us and where we are. I mean that's just basic. I don't know how I get that but it's just who I am and where I'm working through in my own Christianity, and what I'm seeing. I like to start my unit plans off talking about how it [the topic] fits into God's creation because that's what we're teaching first and foremost .... I usually introduce my unit with something from God's Word, or a story or parable tying it in that everything is, everything we do here, is part of God's plan for us. It's part of the way God makes us and it's part of what God's given us. So I think that is a natural way to start your unit (Interview, Mar. 15).

In summation, she returned to her basis, as if trying to explain the unexplainable:

> So, I don't know, how do you get that? Like again, it just seems to be part of you, part of your Christianity and it just comes, like I feel like talking about God and His plan is just a natural way to start off each one of the units (Interview, Mar. 15).

Interspersed in the conversation were extensions of Carol's belief as it was integrated in her unit studies. Referring to the family unit she said, "We're all part of God's family and the family that He has given us." When Carol and the students talked about their individual families, the children immediately made the connection that they were part of God's family. She explained that in some ways "the family structure was a bit of a symbolic representation of God and the way we are. He is our Father and we are His children. Children obey parents as we are to obey God". Carol extended her talk of symbolism to the unit on Seasons. "God doesn't change. God is everlasting. God is always there. God keeps His promises. The whole cycle of the seasons - that things change but there are underlying things that don't change" (Interview, Mar. 15).

My journal notes of Feb. 13 indicated that she took opportunities to integrate Biblical concepts into her teaching or used the teachable moment when the students introduced it. She was talking about the wolf *in Little Red Riding Hood* and *Lon Po Po* "who wasn't using his brain because he was thinking only of his tummy". A reference was made to Bible stories where sin took over. In response Carol commented that "Love gets smaller as greediness gets bigger" (Field notes, Feb. 6). As part of the discussion of the story, *The Lost Puppy*, one of the students said, "Our Mom and Dad are owners of us." Carol turned the comment back to the students, "Do we really belong to them?" The conclusion was that the children really belong to God, but are given to their parents for a while. Following the reading of *The Snow Queen*, the discussion concentrated on the heart that had turned to stone. The heart shattered and anyone who got a piece in their eye were affected by it and had evil in their life as a result. That was related to the way in which Satan works. "All he needs is to get a small hold on our heart and then corrupts all of our life" (Field notes, Mar. 1).

Carol talked about children coming to different levels of learning or understanding as they discussed fairy tales and other literature. According to Stronks and Blomberg (1993), fantasy literature is at one end of the spectrum of an imaginative response to human experience and sometimes fiction is the best way of preparing people to be realistic. Carol's journal indicated her hope that through the study of literature, the children would make connections to real life:

> I also find it comforting to read about a character(s) who is working through some of the same issues I'm dealing with. You understand another experience, even though it might be imaginary. This skill of making connections to real life has to be demonstrated to some students. Some children, because they like to read, will see this connection. Reluctant readers however, will not! Therefore a great deal of discussion must go on in class about books (Carol's journal, Apr. 3).

Carol provided opportunities for spiritual discernment for these young children. She related that her grade one students "saw things at a certain level right now with their experience where they're at, but I think older kids see something [at a different level]." Her previous class of grade five students had been discussing the story *Beauty and the Beast*. They connected the Biblical truth that God looks at the heart rather than at the outward appearance. She acknowledged that some of the discussions with grade one had been fairly abstract as well. She believed that each group which discussed the stories, would come up with something that was uniquely their own. "It would strike you. You'd feel some awe for where they are at" (Interview, Feb. 13). Stronks and Blomberg (1993) speak of this deepening of knowledge as developing new knowing structures, the construction of new categories of insight. Learning occurs because we have seen connections that we previously did not see.

Carol's Devotions And Reflection

The effectiveness of teaching Christianly depends heavily on the level of the teacher's own communion with God. Seeing the Lord in His world, the teacher will find ways to speak of Him (Greene, 1998). Carol spoke of her own devotions and needing a time of reflection. She again referred to "levels of understanding" and "awe" and eventually related back to her teaching:

> Sometimes I think we read things or we see things in the world and you start to take things for granted and it's when you actually sit down and take the time to read and reflect .... I think it's very important to do that because of the different level that you will come to when you take the time to really look at something. I guess it really strikes me that you can find amazing things out of the ordinary.... That is exciting and I guess always fills me with awe that there's so much to learn, there's so much out there, that we just can't take it for granted. We got to make every day special in that you make sure you just notice things, notice more, You need to think more, and take time to reflect and I want to pass that on to my children. That's why I don't want to rush through some of these [stories], take some time to really talk about it. You're demonstrating for them the layers of the story. (Interview, Feb. 13)

Greene (1998) states that as a teacher "becomes gripped by the wonder of God's self-revelation in the creation, he will find imaginative and intriguing ways to suggest the idea to his students" (p. 172). Carol's practice gave expression to that.

Nurturing Expressions of Faith in Children

In explaining the stages of faith development, Westerhoff III (1980) states that in the beginning:

> the gift of faith comes to us when we observe and copy others, when we explore and test; it comes through feelings or sensory experiences in the form of interactions with others and the world. The foundations of faith are found in experiences in which we learn to trust other people, ourselves, and our world, not because we are told we are of worth and the world is trustworthy, but because we experience it as such. (p. 25)

Prayer was part of the school day. The day began with devotions as part of the opening exercises of the class. Prayer was said before lunch and again at the close of the day. None of these prayers were form prayers. At the beginning of the year, Carol led in all of these prayers but, as she explained, the students indicated that they also wanted to pray. The students looked forward to having circle prayer on Friday. Initially Carol started it and the students could pray if they so desired. They just touched the person next to them if they didn't want to participate. Compared to the possible two people who spoke up at the beginning, participation had increased for they now "have most of the class, and they remind me it's Friday and time for circle prayer. They are really keen about it" (Interview, Feb. 13).

Some of the children prayed in their family setting so the transition to praying in public at school was not an anxious experience for them as it was for others. Through talking about prayer, and the act of prayer itself, the students became more comfortable with it. "The point of prayer," said Carol, "is we're talking to God." It's not a performance. God knows what we are saying". Because some of the children were uncomfortable, Carol initially considered having the children pray silently, say thank you for their lunch and then have one student conclude the prayer with "Amen". That may have been an alternative for the children "worrying so much that they forget about God." It was a dilemma with which she continued to struggle because she knew she also had some children who really wanted to pray. At another point when she related the shared prayer time between the grade six and grade one students, she indicated that "my grade ones are really keen about praying, so they are kind of miffed, and upset if they don't get their turn. They have taken over praying at the end of the day too. I used to do that. Now they all want to take turns" (Interview, Feb. 13). Through this, Carol was not only teaching the children about prayer, but also how to pray.

Making Learning Exciting

> The Christian life is one of being surprised by joy. Wherever we look, we see the miracle-working hand of our Father; whomever we see, we see the image of God.... The curriculum should first and foremost reflect this joy and celebration, this wonder and amazement at being alive in such a rich and vibrant world, fashioned for us as our home. (Stronks and Blomberg, 1993, p. 200)

From the outset I could tell by Carol's animation that she enjoyed teaching. Her wonder and amazement at being alive was apparent. Her interaction with the children was positive as she invited them into the story. "Probably the first and biggest reason [that I teach folk tales] is that I love folk tales. I just love folk tales. They have always been a part of my childhood and I remember my mom reading nursery rhymes and folk tales to me and me loving it." She went on to say:

> But my biggest reason is I just love them and I think too if you are really excited, exuberant, and love what you are teaching, you pass that on to your children too. So I need to stretch myself in that I need to make sure that I introduce other things to them as well. But I think everyone has loves and passions, and when you pass that on to your children, you pass something special on to them. The next teacher might not have the

> same loves and passions so they'll pass something different on. (Interview, Feb. 13)

Each day that Carol used a story as a learning tool the children showed enthusiasm. Following the reading of the book, *Once Upon a Golden Apple*, one of the students responded, "It's a fun book"(Field notes, Mar. 6). When Carol read *Frog and Toad*, purposely making mistakes as she went along, the students enjoyed the opportunity to correct her (Field notes, Mar. 6). During one of the times that the grade six and grade one class worked together, the instructions were given to read the story of *Frog and Toad*. "Have grade one read as much as possible," she said to the grade six students. To this she added, "Grade one, you know how to read, but sometimes you like to be lazy." With smirks on their faces some of the grade one students responded, "Yeh" (Field notes, Mar. 13). The grade six and one students also had fun reading together (Field notes, Feb. 7).

Carol desired that her students experience the intrigue of story books. The children discussed the use of shadows in illustrations of folk tales. To the discussion starter, "Shadows in stories mean ...?" students responded with "scary", "dangerous" or a similar describing words. Darren indicated that the picture of the wolf was scarier and gave his reasons why he thought so. Another student started to say, "In the movie" to which Carol responded, "Save your movie till after. You can write about it. Joan, you tell me about the show later. It takes too long." (Field notes, Feb. 6). In her journal Carol wrote about the comparison of books and movies:

> We must excite children about stories and help them see how a good story can be interesting, and in most cases more intriguing than the average television show. It's our job to expose kids to books-through

> shared class reading or by pointing out books that speak to the interests of the students. (Carol's journal, Apr. 3)

Carol, however, also saw value in movies as a teaching tool because she showed a fairy tale video preview at noon hour while the children were eating "so that the children knew what was available." The movie gave snippets of the story and Carol asked, "What's this?", encouraging the children to identify the story. She commented that good actors performed in the original versions. Sensing her enthusiasm, the children asked her why she liked fairy tales so much (Field notes, Mar. 1).

The students were working on a unit on wolves when I first came to their class. They were reading books about wolves, writing about wolves and in two activities acting as wolves. In their acting they used the wolf masks they had made in art class. They were to pretend that they were in a wolf pack, choosing two leaders, lower wolves and pups. They had a choice to act out hunting, eating, playing or feeding the cubs. They were to communicate in "wolf" language. Their understanding of the unit studied and their excitement was evident (Field notes, Jan. 30). Carol gave her perspective on how and why she taught the unit on wolves:

> Using fun themes or science/social studies topics for extending language and language skills not only gives the students a context but many different topics that might interest your students. I just finished a science unit looking at the needs and habitat of wolves. They are fascinating creatures and the children enjoyed learning about them. I then used this theme to look at how wolves are depicted in folk tales and stories. This led to teaching of folk tale elements, comparisons of *Red Riding Hood* stories (including Chinese version called *Lon Po Po*) and introduction of wolf vocabulary. The children were keen to learn and this made it easy to

> motivate them to read or write. Some of the vocabulary was challenging, but because of their keen interest they learned a great amount. It's when you find this kind of topic or theme, that makes the children so enthusiastic, - that teaching is really fun. (Carol's journal, Feb. 5)

At one point when discussing how excited the grade one children were about learning, Carol contrasted a previous teaching experience which had not been pleasant. In her estimation she was being "a policeman". She concluded by saying:

> I wasn't being a teacher....I'm in it to teach children, to do neat learning experiences. I'm in it...to have exciting learning going on....I like them [the students] coming up and being excited about something. You get excited about it and I love to share stories....Learning is exciting. (Interview, Mar. 15)

Possessing and Displaying Pedagogical Insight

Van Brummelen (1998) speaks of teaching as "a religious craft" indicating that teaching must lead to walking in the paths of the Lord or "the way we should go" (p. 22) and also point to the marvelous deeds of the Lord. Viewing teaching as a calling or ministry with the purpose of preparing children for works of service, can only be done to the extent that the teachers possess and continue to deepen their pedagogical insight. He believes that insight grows through study of Scripture, reading about and discussing educational issues, and especially teaching in perceptive and reflective ways.

In one conversation Carol articulated some of the gifts she felt one must have in order to be a teacher. These included taking initiative in the classroom or setting the tone, initiating discussion, knowing how to ask questions - synthesis and comprehension, being very aware of what all the children were doing at all times, calling children back into a discussion if they were not listening, and making eye contact with the children so that you can read their faces for confusion, the "ah-ha's" of learning or lack of attention (Interview, Mar. 15). It was evident from her conversation and journal writing that her background of professional knowledge and experience shaped her practice.

Setting the Tone

The first morning's observation of Carol teaching the children gave evidence of structuring the classroom situation so as to set the tone for teaching. Not only the physical arrangement of the classroom, but also Carol's "personal authority" set the tone. Personal authority according to Van Brummelen (1988) results from "the teacher's insight and ability to guide students, unfold content, structure classroom learning, and enable students to develop and exercise their gifts" (p. 29).

With all the children on the rug, Carol said, "I want to talk to you about folk tales." Midway through the sentence a child moved toward the table and Carol immediately cautioned, "I don't want you around there," and continued on with her review of folk tales. She repeated the students responses, affirmed them and recaptured their ideas using literary language. She gave hints to the children by indicating the beginning sounds of the word for which she was looking. At one point during the discussion she said, "Don't interrupt me anymore. Put your hand up and tell me."

After introducing the author of the book, she invited the children to look at the cover to tell where the story happened. Upon indicating the setting of the story, the students gave reasons for knowing where it took place. The first time through the book consisted of "reading" the illustrations. Carol told the children she also "read" the illustrations when she opened a picture book for the first time. Because the book was a version of *Red Riding Hood* the children used their previous knowledge of the story to tell about the pictures.

The discussions we had in the first week of having a practice teacher indicated that an experienced teacher learns what to look for when the children are in a teaching/learning setting. “Some children have to be repeatedly called back into the discussion. A teacher must “be constantly setting the stage” so that children “prove to me that they’re listening and you got to make eye contact with the kids”. Carol continued:

> You have to read and keep eye contact with the audience at all times because it’s with eye contact that you sometimes pick out, ‘Ben, do you have a question? You look confused.’ Like that’s the way you figure out whether or not they’re getting it.

She felt that if a child was not listening she could sometimes draw the child back just by making eye contact. Their intent gaze or nodding indicated they were “right into it [the lesson]” (Interview, March 15).

Structuring The Classroom

The March 19 video clip was another example of Carol’s teaching skills as she structured the situation, directing the children through the learning process, giving them specific directions so that each step could be followed. She talked the children through the process and then designated their partners and their work space. She began by saying:

> Today we’re going to do partner reading and writing like we worked on before, so you should know how to do everything. I’m going to let you and your partner choose a library book and you may choose a book and you may read one chapter of the book .... Read as much as you can together. You’re helping each other read the ____ [She waited for the answer--words].... After you finish reading, you turn your chairs and you discuss the story. In your group of two, I want you to discuss--Was there a problem in the story? And if there was a problem in the story I

> want you to first say what you think the problem was and a good idea would be that the first person talking can hold the ____ [She waited for an answer--book]. You say what you think the problem was and how the problem was solved.

Using Dialogue in Giving Instructions

Carol often used the "cloze" technique to get the children to finish the sentence. In this way she kept them involved in the instruction and affirmed them as they gave the correct answer. When she used this, any or all of the children responded. They seemed to know that she would not be expecting just one child to give the answer.

Carol anticipated the situations the students might encounter and equipped them to handle the possibilities. She continued with her leading, "Now what happens when there is no problem in the story? What if there is no problem? Keep thinking. What could you share then?" After allowing time for the students to talk through the procedure they had followed previously, Carol reviewed it with them by holding up a finger for each part of the activity that the students were expected to complete and then continued:

> So you're going to read together. You're going to do a _____ [Carol waited for response--'Say Something']. Then you're going to write to your partner, write to each other, and you're going to read your writing to ____ [Carol waited for response - each other], and you're going to work on a word search.
>
> A student responded: Five thing to remember.

Through dialogue Carol reviewed what was expected of the students as they were to complete a five step oral and written language process. She also gave instructions as to what to do upon completion of their reading with, "Put your writing book on my desk and work on a word search puzzle; any word search puzzle that is in your 'cubby'". With these instructions and using partner interaction the students worked for approximately forty minutes. The need for re-direction was minimal as the students went about their tasks.

Knowing How To Ask Questions

Reflecting on a discussion in her University class, Carol wrote in her journal, "Teachers often answer questions to themselves as they ask them, and they expect answers from students to conform to those preconceived in the questioner's mind." She realized how limiting this was for both the students' and teachers' growth. She was also challenged to look at her questioning methods to be sure that a variety of question types were used. "By varying the questions you are able to reach and include more of the children"(Carol's journal, Mar. 6).

At one point Carol asked Joshua a question to which he replied, "I didn't put my hand up." "I know," Carol responded, "but you can tell me." She encouraged the children to use their observation skills to respond to the question, "How do you know he's a hunter?" Carol did not refute any of the children's answers to questions, but often responded with, "We'll see when we read the story." After the story was read and more questions were asked, Carol said, "I'm going to give Kali time to think, because she knows something." Later when a child gave an answer which was not near the correct response, Carol re-read a part of the story to direct the students to the correct answer (Field notes, Jan. 30).

When asked about questioning a student and then giving them time to think, Carol responded, " Sometimes they put their hand up and they forget the answer, ... sometimes they just need time to think a little bit." She continued talking about a specific incident in which David couldn't think of an answer immediately:

> I knew that he would know the answer but he just needed some time to think about it and he feels really pressured by other kids so ... I wanted the kids to just let him have time to think about it cause he can, and he did. He gave me the right answer too. So we all need time to think about something and formulate our [answers]...and the other kids are 'chomping at the bit' because they wanted to say [the answer], but I knew that he knew the answer so I didn't want to pass over him and let somebody else do it for him. I wanted him to have a chance to think about it and come up with the answer himself. (Interview, Feb. 13)

As indicated earlier the students' answers seldom received a negative response from Carol. She sought ways to help the children explain the background to the answer or the reason for the answer rather than discouraging the child. She explained some of her rationale for using different types of questioning:

> Probably, I tend to do that [saying , 'Let's read and find out'] especially with prediction type questions to get the idea that [when] we look at books, we can find information in books. First of all books are for finding information and I want them to find out that they can think something is going to happen or they can predict or say I think this is what I'm going to find out and it can be something different. It's not wrong. We're clarifying our information .... I don't think I've ever said, 'That's wrong.' I might have said, 'Oh you've got a piece of it,' or 'That's not quite it. Can you help him out?' or whatever, but I don't know that I ever come out and say something is wrong because I don't want them [the students] to get the idea that oh, that there's always a right and wrong answer. Sometimes you're just trying to clarify or add on to what you already know or you're making a prediction. You're

> making an assumption and checking it out to see if your idea matches with the book or whatever. I guess you could be too wishy-washy and you have to be careful with that too because sometimes there is a right and wrong answer. So again that's a fine line as to how you handle some of those situations and I guess it would depend on the student too. (Interview, Feb. 13)

Carol felt that by discouraging the right or wrong answer response she was eliminating the opportunity for competition or the thinking that one student or group was "smarter" than the other; a situation which can readily occur. "You see how kids react and this is what happened, 'Yeahhhh! ... Five of us were right'" (Interview, Feb. 13).

Carol gave the children instructions as to what they were to do as she read the book *Something Is Going to Happen*. "I want you to sit and listen, but keep your ideas in your head because at some point I'm going to stop and then you have to draw it".

"Is this a contest?" asked one of the children. The response, "This is what **you** think and what **you** think is the right answer," clearly indicated Carol valued individual thinking and that competition was not part of the activity. Following the reading of a story, the children were asked if they thought the wolf was a good actor. The students who answered negatively were encouraged to give their reasons for their decision and those who answered affirmatively were asked to do the same. In each case, Carol encouraged them to expand on their answers (Field notes, Feb. 6).

She also used the technique of having the students answer their own questions. As the story *Lon Po Po* was read, Darren raised his hand to ask, "What do you mean- 'The day is long and the journey is short?'" It was obvious by his actions and look on his face that he wanted to answer his own question. Carol responded, "That's a good question. What do you think it means?" In other instances, fellow students answered the question, as was the case when a student asked, "What does delighted mean?". Others eagerly answered when Carol asked them to do so (Field notes, Feb. 6).

In whole class instruction, questioning was used effectively as a teaching tool to expand the students' knowledge, clarify their thinking, test their predictions, find specific information, call students back to attention and affirm students in what they wanted to share.

"Reading" the Class

Acknowledging different rates of learning.

When Carol introduced a new learning activity to the class and the students were not totally comfortable with it, Carol realized she had to be sensitive to this. The "Say Something" was an activity for engaging children in oral and written language which Carol became familiar with in *The Authoring Cycle* by Jerome Harste. She indicated that she first modeled the activity for the children with another adult. One child, expressing the uneasiness after using it a couple of times questioned, "Are we going to do a 'Say It'?" Carol responded by saying, "Some of you enjoy it. Some of you don't" (Field notes, Feb. 6). Her journal elaborated on her understanding of their discomfort:

> Some of the students found it incredibly difficult to respond. It took a great deal of thought and concentration to respond to the question. At first they were shy with each other and there was some giggling. But once they got down to it they were able to share their thoughts. The next few sharing times got progressively easier. They began to focus quicker and weren't afraid to use real language to share what's on their mind. When sharing with each other they seem to get ideas from each other. One person's ideas trigger ideas in the partner. I was impressed at how

> focused they became after a few sharing sessions. (Carol's journal, Feb. 20)

Carol demonstrated the same kind of sensitivity when she heard complaints as she handed out a sheet of spelling words. She called attention to this when she was ready to begin the instructions. She talked about the reason for the spelling words and explained that this activity was one which would help them learn the words (Field notes, Feb. 15). In introducing another new activity as a follow-up to the "Say Something", the students were encouraged to use symbols as another means of communication. She explained it carefully and concluded with, "Maybe this is meant for older children, but I think you can do it" (Field notes, Feb. 13).

Carol used her sense of judgment when she moved the students on to another level of independence. Previously they had been writing with a fair amount of assistance from the adult volunteers and aides in the classroom. After Carol read the conclusion of *The Snow Queen*, the students worked in partners telling which part they liked the best. They did their writing in a new notebook. Carol did not require their writing to have everything spelled correctly. When finished the student or Carol read the piece aloud. She also indicated she did not want the students to draw pictures (My journal, Feb. 29). The students moved from an activity of dependence to one of greater independence.

She had to use this same sense of judgment and experience as she continued with the shared reading. In observing one of the sets of partners I wondered how effective reading in partners was when students have so much trouble. My journal showed my skepticism:

> What would Darren and Brian have done if I hadn't helped? Would they have pretended they had read or would Brain have read everything himself? Darren was so antsy and couldn't stay in his chair. He is so

> smart but reading doesn't seem to have clicked for him. He is still very interested in learning. (My journal, Feb. 13)

Viewing the video of these same students, recorded a month later, made me realize the progress the children had made. Carol's trust in the process and in the children was of benefit to the children. Her statement, "We need to, at times, push them and at other times give them time and space" was indeed true (Carol's journal, Feb. 28).

Adapting the structure.

Carol could often sense how ready the children were to stay on task. If they were not ready she put parameters around where they could be or what they could do. After giving the instructions for partner conversation, she indicated, "You may not be in the box, not in the hallway. Don't even ask me" (Field notes, Feb. 1). Another time she said, "You people are getting restless today. My patience is going like this (She indicates by bringing her fingers together). OK, sit on your behinds" (Field notes, Feb. 8). Reflecting on a less than successful science lesson in which the students used thermometers to measure temperature in various locations, Carol realized there were a number of factors that contributed to the confusion. One stated reason was, "that was a particularly wild day for them too. It was just kind of scattered anyway, so in some ways I should have been sensitive to [the situation]" (Interview, Mar. 15).

The students were not left with idle time where unproductive activities could result or "wandering around not knowing what they were supposed to do". I noticed Carol always gave the children an activity to do on the carpet so there was no cause for mischief. She seemed to know which students might be the instigators. By "over planning" she was seldom without an activity to which the students could be directed (Interview, Mar. 15, My journal, Feb. 13).

Being Well Planned

Purposeful content planning.

"You are supposed to be leading this group of children to learn a new concept or learn something," was Carol's response when I asked her why it was so important to have a well thought out lesson plan. Reflecting on her earlier teaching, she indicated that personal preparation was necessary:

> I didn't dare walk into any situation where I didn't feel that I knew where I was going to go with something ... My own personality is - I need to be prepared. I need to, in some senses, practice before hand and I used to practice my Bible stories and read background information for all my Bible stories. I read background information so that when it came to something that talked about the Passover feast, I wanted to be able to explain it to the children. I had to understand it in order to lead my children in understanding it. (Interview, Mar. 15)

Reflecting on careful planning of units and lessons, sequencing of learning activities and exhibiting clear thinking in the classroom, Van Dyk states, "'Winging it' and fuzzy analysis hurts our effectiveness as Christian teachers" (2000, p. 93). Although I did not look at her plan book, it was apparent from the flow of the learning activities that her current teaching continued to reflect similar planning and preparation as described in her earlier teaching:

> I have to write everything down. I have to write it so that it's solidified in my mind what I'm going to do and the way I'm going to go with things. And I probably don't write as much as I did my first few years in my lesson plans, but I still write quite a bit compared to other teachers that have been teaching as long as me. I still write quite a bit but that organizes me. That helps me to focus on where I want to go with

> something. I'm not just 'walking in cold' without having thought about it somewhat before hand. (Interview, Mar. 15)

Carol talked about evaluating her teaching in two ways. One way was to look at her expectations and determine if the children met those expectations. The second way was to look at her expectations to see if some of the children went beyond them, "You are successful because you spurred them on to something way more creative and something bigger than what you had originally anticipated" (Interview, Mar. 15).

As Carol related how she felt there had been a misinterpretation of "whole language", she emphasized that planning was essential in "whole language". Skills and concepts must be taught, but must be taught to the students in a meaningful way if themes were being used. Van Dyk (2000) contends that technical know-how is not necessarily an expression of meaningful teaching. A teacher needs to invest time and energy into matching the best pedagogy to each subject and not neglect taking time to reflect on their own practice of teaching. Carol's feelings about isolated technical know-how came to expression as she related a story from her current university class:

> One of the ladies said last night , 'You know they ["whole language" teachers] think if they have apples as a theme, then any activity you do with apples is good.' ... It's not meeting the curriculum if it's not teaching the children, pushing them further, if it's not looking where they are at and moving them on from there, then you're not teaching anything. You have no purpose to [your teaching]. You're just grabbing any apple activity and there's no reason as to why you do it, other than it's apples. (Interview, Mar. 15)

Purposeful reading and writing strategies.

At other times Carol also underscored that teachers had to have purpose to their teaching. She indicated that in leading the children through a story, there must be a purpose for reading. "The children have to think about that purpose as the teacher leads them through the story and brings the lesson to a conclusion" (Interview, Mar. 15). "Teachers need to discuss story elements (e.g. characters, setting, plot, prediction, inferring, symbolism) and should constantly be reading books that emphasize these concepts. Again if we don't point out these concepts some students will never notice them" (Carol's journal, Apr. 3). Carol was specific in informing the children of the purpose of the activities in the following examples: "Today we'll re-read it [*Lon Po Po*]. Just enjoy it and we'll compare *Lon Po Po* to *Red Riding Hood* "(Field notes, Feb. 6). Another time the students were to write a story about wolves, snow, a fairy tale or anything they wanted, but it must have characters and a setting. They were to determine whether it was real or make-believe. The following day the students were to introduce a problem into the story. Carol's comment that day was, "Maybe we're interfering too much, but I want them to get the structure of story" (Field notes, Mar. 6). Before viewing the video *Into The West* , the students reviewed their understanding of a fantasy story. As they watched the video they were to find the make-believe parts, determine what was special about the horse and be able to describe a gypsy (Field notes, Mar. 15).

As I participated in the classroom, a number of purposes for reading a book to the students were demonstrated. Carol explained these in an earlier discussion:

> But other times I'll say, 'No, we're not going to have any interruptions today . This is one of my favorite stories and I want to read it right through, so we can hear the whole [story], and I'll actually make them be

> quiet .... In the one instance, when you say you want the whole story, you're modeling a story flow. And in the other time you're modeling - well, sometime one point hinges (on another). It's important that you get this one point in order that you're going to follow the other point. Or you're going to predict or read between the lines, so you're modeling both and you got to get a balance. We don't want to wreck the flow of the story at all. (Action research project, transcript, Mar. 20)

In her journal Carol indicated that "picture reading" was a very important step in reading. Children have to be made aware of the purpose of pictures and how to use them:

> Children need to be introduced to symbolic elements in illustrations so they begin to look for deeper levels of meaning (examples: forests are symbolic of danger or the unknown whereas a house is the place of safety. Colours symbolize feelings - red is warmth; blue is cold and sad). Pictures are not the real thing but they symbolize the real thing and the symbolic element can relate to the child's life journey. We need to help children see connections between stories and their lives.
>
> When children see connections between story journeys and their life journey then books become more than 'just stories'. They can evoke emotion and empathy for the characters read about. (Carol's journal, Feb. 19)

Carol was confident in her purpose for teaching the students how to write, as well as the reasons for following certain procedures. "They are learning how to express themselves orally and you talk to them and give them examples. Well they need to learn how to express themselves in writing as well". She indicates that even though other teachers may frown on the idea of giving beginning writers a topic, she does so because she feels they need ideas. These topic included their favorite thing to eat, favorite book, or favorite television show. She also gave topics which pertained to the unit they were studying at the time. They not only learned how to put words in print, but Carol "learns about their interests and their likes" (Interview, Mar. 15).

At times the children wrote following a "Say Something" activity in which they had a structured opportunity to verbalize their ideas before they wrote them down. At other times they wrote on the prescribed topic or on a topic of their own choice. The children wrote in some form everyday. Several days a week parents came in to help during the students writing time. As the children wrote in their journal and wanted to use a word they had difficulty spelling, they turned to "My Best Try". Each child had a booklet with a line drawn down the middle of each page. On the one side of the line the word was written as the children thought it should be spelled. They then took that to an adult who would confirm the number of letters they had correct, and if necessary write the correct spelling on the other side of the line. The child then copied the correct spelling into their journal. This method not only affirmed the students, but also gave them a final piece of writing of which they were proud. Their final step was to read the piece to Carol, who then gave them a stamp. Through experience Carol has found this method worked the best for her class (Field notes, Feb. 1, Action Research transcript, Mar. 13).

For the purpose of evaluating student progress a variation of this method was used. Carol shared with her colleagues that just before report cards she had the students write a couple of journal entries where no assistance was given. Instead volunteers wrote down what the students said they wrote. From this Carol could see that some students were using invented spelling and that there was some correlation between letters and sounds. Some were putting spaces between the words. Some were using capitals or periods. It gave an idea as to what concepts or skills had to be reinforced (Action research transcripts, Mar. 6)

Carol put much thought and planning into her shared reading and writing activity. It was evident that the students had learned how to work together, just as she had planned. She questioned her own role while the activity carried on:

> I'm only playing the role of question asker/idea generator.... I wanted to be available if the partners need assistance when coming up with ideas for writing but so far my role has been very limited. I'm very amazed at how they help each other to read and the patience they displayed. The stronger reader tends to assist the weaker reader but they show incredible patience and you can clearly see there is learning going on for both. Their conversation tends to be about their activity and it hasn't been necessary for me to step in and stop students from fooling around. They are all working very diligently! It's really exciting to listen to and see! (Carol's journal, Feb. 29)

During the writing activities, the students readily asked an adult to help them spell. Comments in my field notes such as "The words flowed quite quickly onto the page and the students were eager to ask for help," and "The students wrote more in a short time than I've ever seen them write," confirmed Carol's observations (Field notes, Mar. 6, 15).

Using background knowledge and experience.

Near Carol's desk were shelves of books, both professional resources and children's literature. This was a confirmation of what was evident in Carol's teaching. She drew on the learning she had done in the last number of years at the university. Her focus on children's literature was influenced by the courses she took as well as her own experiences with fairy tales. She also indicated that she gained experience in teaching them simply because she had read and re-read them for many years as a teacher (Interview, Mar. 15). Her focus on literary language also stemmed from the Children's Literature courses taken. She used the "Say Something" activity and attributed that to Jerome Harste's, *The Authoring Cycle*. Having talked about Vygotsky's "zone of proximal development" in an interview, she made a number of references to it in our conversations in the classroom.

As Carol planned what was to occur in the classroom she relied on her previous teaching experience. When asked about an action taken when she and the grade six teacher worked together with their classes, she responded that she really didn't think about it; it had always been done that way. When relating an unpleasant teaching experience of her past, she indicated she wouldn't repeat some of the things she had done then, but at the same time indicated she learned from the situation (Interview, Mar. 15). This was the class that made her think of something she had not thought of previously. As they were reading *Beauty and the Beast*, "they tied it into Jesus saying, 'I don't look on the outside; I look on the inside.' So they really pulled some different elements into it ....Some of their discussion was fairly abstract" (Interview, Feb. 13). When asked how she decided what to do when faced with the immediate dilemmas in the classroom, Carol concluded, "Experience" (Interview, Mar. 15). That was evident when we reflected on a situation where Vince took his turn to pray and spoke too quickly. Although he was resilient, there were others who were not. "I can relate to it very well myself", said Carol. When questioning, Carol sometimes has the other students wait as she gave a particular student time to think about how the question could be answered. "We all need time to think about something and formulate our [answer]. I know I need that, so I make sure" (Interview, Feb. 13).

Her experience with journal writing and editing from her university courses was used as an example for the students. As she was teaching the students about writing in a journal she related how difficult it was for her to begin a journal when that was required in her university course. At another time she showed the children a paper which she had written and had edited by someone else. She told about the changes her own writing had to go through before it became a finished product. She knew these examples made an impact on the children because of parents' positive comments (Interview, Mar. 15).

Respecting the Child

Working with Carol in her classroom, I observed many situations where love and respect were shown. I reflected upon the affirmation given to the children, the value attributed to the students as they were given time to think or speak, the accommodations made so that each child could learn at his or her own level, and the expectation that each child was capable of reaching his or her potential. I commented to Carol, "You show respect for children is so many ways!" "I'm glad I do that," she responded. During the conversation that followed, she said, "You have to kind of know your kids and know yourself and what you find respectful and what you find disrespectful" (Interview, Feb. 13). Although Carol was referring specifically to responses to literature, what she wrote in her journal was indicative of how she viewed children. She wrote:

> We also need to allow our students the opportunity to talk freely respecting their responses to the literature (whether it's positive or negative). By listening to our students and showing respect for their feelings we give them the right to have an opinion. (Carol's journal, Apr. 3)

Expectations in Behavior

Expectations in terms of behavior were expressed frequently in the classroom. Each day included one or more times when the children sat on the rug in front of Carol to receive instruction. The children were expected to be quietly seated facing Carol, keeping their hands to themselves and ready to listen to her.

> The one thing I can 'lose my cool' over with this class is when I am talking or reading and someone (or two or three children) just start talking over me. This has been my biggest battle this year. (Carol's journal, Mar. 9)

My notes verified Carol's journal writing that the students were frequently reminded of these expectations. "I'm not going to pick people who put their hand in my face and make noise" (Field notes, Jan. 30), "Once you've finished and said anything you wanted to, put your chairs away and sit quietly on the carpet" (Field notes, Feb. 13) and "When we share everyone else is silent; no exceptions" (Field notes, Feb. 6). The incident where Carol just sat and waited caused some of the children to say, "She's waiting" indicating they were aware of the expected behavior (Field notes, Jan. 30). The fact that Brian went to sit at his place at his table with his head down, after being given a non-verbal signal was another indicator that the students knew they were not to "fool around" while instruction was occurring (Field notes, Feb. 8). Before reading *Something is Going to Happen*, Carol had given instructions that the children were to use their imagination. This was to be done without talking out loud. Even though Kali raised her hand, Carol said, "No" and shook her head, letting the children know she expected her instructions to be followed (Field notes, Feb. 15).

In the classroom there were times to be quiet and there were times to be noisy. When the students were involved in working with a partner in reading, writing or speaking, there was noise. As Carol said, "Constructive noise doesn't bother me, but fooling around and interrupting; that bothers me" (Interview, Feb. 2). When the grade six and the grade one students worked together they were given the warning, "I'm giving you the benefit of the doubt, but as soon as you fool around, that's it" (Field notes, Jan. 30). Upon dismissal the "white group" left rather noisily and were immediately called back (Field notes, Feb. 13). It was evident that a certain level of decorum was expected out of respect for others and the classroom.

Carol indicated in her journal writing that some of these expectations were courtesies which required teaching:

> The last two years I have been very amazed at the amount of time I've spent teaching grade one students not to speak while someone else is talking or not to interrupt. This year I have a great bunch of children but interrupting is to the excess! A student will be talking to me and a second child walks up and expects me to drop everything and listen to them. And when I point this out to the second child, there are times where they pout and are mad because I won't immediately listen to them. I sometimes cannot believe the angry reaction I get if I ask them to wait and there are times where they do not see my point that they have to wait until I'm done with the first student. (Carol's journal, Mar. 9)

Although students were not reprimanded very often, the majority of the times a reprimand was necessary, occurred while the students were on the rug. Attention was drawn to their inappropriate behavior of not keeping their hands to themselves, talking or disturbing others. One child was regarded as stubborn and another was spoken to because of her complaining attitude. These reprimands were indicators of what was expected.

After a particularly difficult time with the combined grade six and grade one class of approximately forty five students, Carol related what was disappointing her. Her expectations of the grade six students were similar to what I had observed in the grade one class, however the level of expectation was greater. They included being reliable, following instructions, taking pride in their work and taking time to do their best. "Being mature" was a summation of all of the qualities mentioned. It was an expectation of a grade six student, but not of a grade one student to the same degree (Interview, Mar. 15).

Expectations in Learning

In the first interview Carol spoke of children doing "the best job they can do" and related that she had been reading a lot about Vygotsky and realized we should focus more on the child's capability. She talked about the implications of this for her classroom:

> So I guess in choosing your activities you chose activities... working within the zone of approximate development, because you know what kids can actually do is a lot different than what their potential is. So you want to be a little bit beyond what they can actually do, so at least they're being challenged... so that they can work toward their potential. (Interview, March 1)

Carol insisted that the spelling of the letters which the students were writing be correct because "someone from the outside would be reading it". For the same reason "the periods have to be in the right spot". She was very particular and made the children erase or add more sentences as she felt it was necessary. Some of the students were getting anxious to be finished and therefore did not do their best. When she became aware of this, she paid special attention to them. She made Orin finish his changes while she was reading a story to the others. When she checked his completed work her comment was, "Awesome. You want to like your letter (Field notes, Feb. 8).

Following the video *Into the West* the students talked with their writing partners and soon wrote lengthy responses. Ben had a hard time concentrating and readily felt he was not capable of the writing assignments. When he wrote, "The boy missed the boy", Carol said, "Look at me. The boy missed the boy?" implying that his sentence did not make sense. Ben changed the sentence so it corresponded to the video (Field notes, Mar. 15). Joshua was a little boy who sometimes spoke with a lisp. As long as he concentrated, he could control his speech. At one point Joshua said a word with a lisp and Carol good-naturedly poked him with her elbow saying, "You know how to say it" (Field notes, Feb. 6).

In a discussion with other teachers, Carol shared some of the curricular expectations:

> I introduce all the vowels and we go over long and short vowels but that is not a guarantee that all of them will know it by the end of the year... At the end of grade one, if they can write a full sentence with capitals and periods at the end, that is excellent. A lot of them can do a lot more. I've got kids working on stories and they're writing a lot more than just one sentence... I expect three or four sentences in their story and that's what they can handle. So you get anywhere from four sentences in a story up to about twenty". (Action research transcript, Mar. 13)

Because most of the student's writing was read to an adult, it usually met the expectation of neatness, of making sense, using correct spelling and punctuation. This also meant that, as mentioned earlier, the students were expected to put forth their best effort.

Meeting Individual Needs

Although most of the teaching lessons were given to the whole class as they sat on the rug, there was time for smaller groups and for individual instruction and attention. Carol's respect for each child and her sensitivity to the individual needs was evident during her teaching lessons and was expressed in her journal writing:

> One thing I've learned in the last few years is we have to listen to children to try to understand where they are coming from. The way they solve problems, handle conflicts, complete their assignments or answer questions orally all reflect something of their life experience:... I've found by listening closely, questioning further and opening your mind to other possible ways of looking at things you can understand a bit where the child is coming from. (Carol's journal, Mar. 6)
>
> Why not focus on what the child can do and help them focus on their own learning journey. Help them realize their learning journey is unique to them and they won't accomplish things like anyone else. Then work on helping the class respect everyone's journey no matter where they are at. (Carol's journal, Mar. 13)

Academic Needs.

It was not very often that the students read aloud in a group. While some of the children read silently from their choice of books that related to the wolf theme, Carol read with a group of five children from a common text. Each child took their turn reading and Carol gave positive reinforcement. When one group finished she read with another group of five students. This activity occurred on the first day that I participated in the classroom, but it did not occur again while I was there. Daily the students read their own writing to Carol. They received help in reading the words as assistance was required. This was so much part of their routine that Carol drew attention to the change on the day she video taped the children, "When you finish reading to your partner, normally you would come up and read it to a teacher. Read it to me this afternoon" (Field notes, Mar. 19). At one point Joan was reading words to Carol and as she read each one correctly, the word was colored. As Joan hesitated, Carol encouraged, "I know you know some," and when she finished praised her with, "Look how many you got, Joan. Good job!" Carol commented later, "I know this is way different than reading in context. I also have them read to me" (Field notes, Jan. 30).

Carol felt that the open ended activities allowed challenges for both high and low academic abilities, tended to be self motivating and let "students have enough leeway to express their ideas and do things that excite them" (Carol's journal, Apr. 3). These open ended activities such as journaling and writing permitted some to go beyond "your minimal expectations.... I have different expectations of Kali than I do of Debbie. Debbie can handle about one sentence and Kali can easily write four or five" (Interview, Mar. 1). The students were made aware of these expectations because as Carol handed out their books, she said their name and asked each student how many sentences he or she was going to write. Joshua, who was a very capable boy, was given specific guidance to encourage him to meet his potential as I found out by working with him. He chose to exceed those expectations as my journal account indicated:

> Each time Joshua counts the number of words in a sentence because Carol said he must have at least seven words in a sentence. Yesterday he had written one sentence and I understood that if he wrote one long sentence he would be done. We used "because" to make the long sentence. When we were finished he said he needed another sentence. He had an idea and I encouraged him to write it down... In no time he was finished. (Feb. 29)

At one point Shaun wanted to copy *The Snow Queen* as his writing assignment but was not permitted to do so because "he has lots of ideas". Carol did not want him to be writing without independent thinking and what he subsequently wrote revealed his capabilities (Interview, Mar. 15).

As writing was part of each day, many of the students were not only given individual attention in the type of assignment they received, but were also taught the writing skills that they needed at the moment. My notes included, "Some of the children had an increased amount to write. Some had to draw a picture and color it. Some had to be encouraged to write neatly and stay on task. Again individuality is considered" (Field notes, Feb. 15). Carol felt that when she edited the students work with them, she had the opportunity to teach to the child's needs (Interview, Mar. 1). Carol wrote about a child's need for individual help:

> I worked with a boy today who came up with his assignment and he had most of his answers wrong. I helped him with a couple of questions and sent him back to his desk. He came back to me with most of the corrections wrong too. He does not have the ability to work step by step through an assignment--he tends to be all over the place and he cannot follow examples. However, when I pointed to each question and asked questions to direct his attention he was able to fix most of the problems. But when he went to write in his writing book again he cannot organize himself to move in the right direction etc. When I assist him he can see what he is capable of but he cannot at this point do it alone. But like Vygotsky says, 'What one does with assistance today, they'll do alone tomorrow.' Remembering this helped me to have a different perspective and attitude toward these children's progress. (Carol's journal, Feb. 28)

Carol worked with the resource teacher in planning programs for the children who were struggling. They sought to complement each other in their activities and used the "same lingo"(Interview, Mar. 1). Sometimes the children left to receive extra help from the resource teacher, but often the resource teacher remained in the classroom.

Carol believed that by observing the children carefully she could learn a great deal about how she could aid the "student's language processes. When you respect each child, just where they are at, you enable them to move along (progress) at their own individual pace"(Carol's journal, Apr. 3).

Social, Emotional and Spiritual Needs.

Not only did Carol attend to their individual academic needs, she also considered the social, emotional and spiritual needs of individual children. Carol realized that the way in which she responded to the children's answers could have a detrimental emotional effect on them. This could result in taking away from them the desire to contribute in the group by saying "other kids would kind of shut up and then you wouldn't hear from them again for a long time." She indicated that Brian "might not give it another try" but others like Elizabeth "could probably cope with that... so it depends on the situation and it depends on the child" (Interview, Feb. 13). For that reason she gave the students ample time to respond to a question, affirmed their contributions, and gave the loving attention necessary.

Brian's behavior was disturbing the others as Carol was teaching so he was asked to sit at the corner of the carpet. Carol explained that because of Brian's hyperactivity he was on medication, but the effect of the medications "wears off about 1:30." His behavior is "almost confrontational, challenging.... In the morning he is a totally different child and I worry about it" She knew it was time to talk to his mother again. (Interview, Feb. 13)

Debbie was a tiny girl who appeared less mature than the other students. On several occasions she received special attention. As Carol was eliciting responses to a question of writing procedure, Debbie's answer expressed the fear that she might forget to write down something which she had said. Carol reassures her that, "If you talk and you right away write, I think you'll remember, Debbie" (video, Mar. 19). As the children shared the stories they wrote, Debbie tried to begin, but because of her nervousness had her fingers in her mouth. Carol gently said, "Take your fingers out of your mouth," and then helped her read what she had written (Field notes, Feb. 6). The following day Debbie again found an activity too challenging so Carol offered, "Find a newspaper and I'll help you" (Field notes, Feb. 7).

It was Vince's turn to pray before lunch. He very quickly did so and another student commented that Vince's prayer couldn't be heard. Carol asked Vince to repeat it and he readily did so. I asked Carol to explain how she knew how to handle a situation such as this. She viewed it as a public speaking experience and compared it to sharing time:

> I try and judge the situation with each child because sometimes you have a child who is so totally scared and you can tell they're scared. You have to come up and stand right beside (the child) and you almost have to put your arm around them to make them feel better. Somebody like that, I probably wouldn't make them do it again.... Vince is very resilient and I think Vince, you can go back and slow him down and he's not going to go away and worry about it. He's very laid back in what he thinks about things. So in that case I could say, Why don't you try it again. I don't think he would get uptight about that or be afraid, whereas Brian-- I probably wouldn't do that because Brian is [afraid]. You can tell he's just scared when he stands beside me and I would whisper in his ear and

> give him some idea of what to say because they're [the students] just not used to it. So I think I would handle every child differently. (Interview, Feb. 13)

When Ben returned from working with the resource teacher Carol usually told him what to do (put away his books etc.) and join the other students on the carpet or in whatever activity the rest of the class was involved at that time. He was never left wondering what was happening (My journal, Feb. 13). Consideration was also given to the children as they were invited to pray before lunch. Each child was given a turn, but Carol was questioning whether she "should make them pray out loud" as she did not know how comfortable some were with praying in front of others and did not know whether or not some of the children prayed out loud at home (Interview, Feb. 13).

Carol tried to maintain the child's sense of dignity when a reprimand was given. A complaining little girl was told to leave the group and sit at her table. She was eventually called over to Carol so they could talk about the situation. They conversed in quiet tones and as another student approached, Carol signaled the other child to leave (Field notes, Feb. 1).

Allowing Choices.

Carol also met the students' individual needs by allowing them to make their own choices. Carol's grade one classroom was a place where structured directed learning occurred, but where students were given choices in how to accomplish their learning.

Often the children were presented with an assortment of books which pertained to the unit or theme which they were studying. For example, the children could pick from one of the versions of *Red Riding Hood* that had been shared in the class or from books about dogs or wolves during their silent reading time (Field notes, Jan. 30). They also had a choice of book when the students read together with their grade one or grade six partners (video, Mar. 19, Field notes, Mar. 13). Carol gives her reasons for this choice:

> Children must be allowed to choose books they wish to read. They must be able to take ownership of their learning and language development by making some choices for themselves. If it is a book they've chosen they are usually more determined to read it. Their interest will motivate them to complete the book even if it's a bit of a struggle.... We need to allow children the enjoyment of the books they choose because they will then realize that reading is a pleasurable experience.... If children look on reading as a chore or a boring activity then you are not going to see progress in their language skills. (Carol's journal, Apr. 3)

Sometimes the children not only chose their own story but also their own reading partner as was evident in their questions, "Do we get to pick our partner? Do we get to pick our story?" On that day the response was, "No, because I have a reason for putting you together" (Field notes, Feb. 13).

Choices are also made when the students are involved in writing. At times they chose a writing partner, but that appeared to be less frequent than choice of topic. "I'm choosing your partner and I don't want you to argue. Just sit beside your partner (Mar. 19). Carol tried to choose partners who would complement each other's skills. There were times when the students had limited choice or free choice in their writing topic. Having given them enough topics to write about in the earlier part of the year, Carol began to give them some free choice in their topics in December or January. Carol also said that sometimes she gave the students a theme and if someone requested to write about a significant event such as a new baby sister, that would be granted "because she's got something she wants to share in writing and express in writing. Awesome!" (Interview, Mar. 15).

The editing of the students' writing also involved choices. In working with Annette, Carol said, "You want to use proper English, don't you?" Carol gave her two choices as to how she could say something and Annette made the choice and wrote it down (Field notes, Mar. 14). When Vince brought his writing to Carol she indicated that his problem was starting every sentence with "I" but gave him the option of working it out by himself or with his partner before returning to her (Field notes, Feb. 13).

A Need For Redirection.

Having certain expectations for behavior also meant that there were consequences or a redirection of some form. This redirection was dealt with on an individual basis. The consequence of interrupting or disturbing the teaching/learning situation on the rug was usually a warning followed by separation from the group. Sometimes the student was required to sit at their place at the table with his or her head down. Only in a situation of repeated occurrences did the child "lose a recess" (Field notes, Feb. 6).

There was one situation were a number of students were involved. The boys went out into the hall to talk with Carol about their involvement in play fighting. It appeared that all of the boys were involved, but I found later that "if anyone was involved who was still in the classroom, he would be 'in trouble'". Eventually they returned and "none appeared devastated"(Field notes, Mar. 1). Carol's writing indicated how she felt about dealing with these situations:

> Getting to the truth and dealing with lying behavior is the most time consuming discipline area a teacher deals with. I value truth telling therefore my class know if they misbehave and admit to it they might get into a bit of trouble. But if they misbehave and lie about it, there will be much bigger consequences. My handling of these situations is not always perfect but I think I make it clear that I value truth telling. At this

> point in the year I don't tend to have trouble with lying because my students know I won't go on until I know the truth about what happened. And children who have had trouble with lying are praised a great deal when they tell the truth automatically and take responsibility for what they have done. (Carol's journal, Mar. 9)

Carol also dealt with a problem situation which involved grade eight students and grade one students. A similar situation, involving the grade eight students and grade three students, occurred on the previous day. Because the grade ones had been the recipients of the grade eight students' abusive behavior, Carol explained to her students the consequences of the grade eight students' actions, when she returned to the classroom. She had the grade one students admit their part in the fight and informed them that there would be consequences if that behavior happened again (Field notes, Feb. 8). Carol exercised a fair evaluation of these types of situations as well as a great sensitively to the needs of the child(ren) involved. She nudged or redirected each child in the way that the child should go (Van Dyk, 2000).

Operating in a Community

Students Working Together

"One Family Under the Same Sky" was the saying in large letters above the bulletin board in Carol's classroom. It was symbolic of the unity experienced in the classroom. There was a sense of peace and good will as everyone worked together. My journal indicated what happened each day to foster this sense of unity, "Some students sit beside each other but work independently. Some write the same thing; some cooperate to help each other" (Feb. 29).

Excerpts from Carol's journal clearly describe what was played out in her classroom:

> I've been trying to have my children engage in partnered reading and writing every day. They read in pre-determined partners (I have to pair them according to their abilities!) and then respond in writing to what they've read...But with this writing I'm emphasizing ideas and peer editing/assistance. (Feb. 29)

> I've also had children reading together in partners and was very interested in the way the pairs related to one another. In some pairs, one of the partners (usually the stronger one) took leadership and helped the other child through the reading. Some of them divided the story and each person read a few pages. Some groups did a paired reading method and read everything together! I found the method for reading and verbal dialogue very informative. The children talked about everything from the story to what they'll be doing on the weekend. Most topics sprung from the story and I really didn't have to get after anyone for fooling around. They seemed to stay on task. The social context of this exercise aided the child who couldn't read well and provided opportunity to share ideas by using real language. When we walk around and listen to the interaction you know that learning is taking place. (Feb. 20)

There was a strong sense of caring for one another as the children sat on the rug listening to reading and instruction. Their attentive behavior (for the most part) indicated that they wanted to learn together. The students had a time of sharing where three children per day could share something and then three others could ask questions. There was a sense of confidence and pride as they shared. Darren offered, "I wrote something and I want to share it." This indicated the sense of acceptance that was prevalent (Field notes, Feb. 6). Following the reading of *Something Is Going to Happen* the children were to draw a picture of what they saw in their mind. Each had opportunity to show their picture and tell about it. The students clapped when everyone had finished (Field notes, Feb. 15). When they did activities other than the reading and writing described above, they also cooperated with one another. Often they worked with others in a group.

Carol also contributed to this sense of unity and camaraderie. Although the students respected her as their teacher, they also saw her as a real person. Carol said she was going to re-read *Red Riding Hood* for enjoyment - without stopping, but when she stopped to answer Darren's question, Ben piped up, "You said you wouldn't stop" (Field notes, Feb. 6). Ben enjoyed having Carol as a partner for the "Say Something" activity, preferring to listen to her rather than having to express himself (Field notes, Feb. 13). During lunch time Carol told the students to hurry because it was her turn for playground supervision. Using some of the literary language they had learned, she said, "You have to be out when the big hand is on the four. I'm 'threatening' today. It's not a 'bribe'. Last week it was a 'bribe'" (Field notes, Feb. 15). During another lunch time the children asked her why she liked fairy tales so much (Field notes, Mar. 1).

Once a week the grade six students teamed up with the grade one students for reading and writing. This was a practice Carol had participated in for a number of years.When asked why she participated in this she responded:

> I guess I've always thought it's important for older children and younger children to work together. The older children of course are demonstrating... I think it is important for more experienced language users to demonstrate for kids who aren't as experienced and at the same time I think those young kids challenge the older kids because the older kids have to think a lot more about [such things as], 'OK, what am I writing and am I modeling the proper grammar?' It makes them a little more accountable in their writing whereas sometimes they'll rush

> through and ah, it doesn't matter. But when they have the responsibility of helping a younger person, they take a little more time to really think about it and do the best job they can do. (Interview, Feb. 13)

Later Carol indicated that the benefits of the two grades working together went beyond the classroom. This also helped in the communication and interaction on the playground. The classes came together in the time slot prior to lunch so it was the practice that a number of grade six and grade one students prayed together before their meal. In some cases the grade six students were modeling for the grade ones and at other times it was reversed. "In some senses the grade ones' prayers are a little more sincere than the grade six's" (Interview, Feb. 13).

Although the grade one class worked with the grade six students once a week, the grade one students also had other opportunities to interact and work with students from other classes. Taking a class of grade one students skating can be rather daunting. Carol asked some junior high students to not only tie skates for the children, but also skate with them on the outdoor rink (Field notes, Mar. 5). Her students joined the other grade one class to practice a poem for the all school assembly which followed the "Penny Carnival". The students participated with all the other students in the school to raise funds as their contribution to Christian Schools District 11's annual fund raising effort to support the publication of resource materials written from a Christian perspective. It is clear that Carol saw her classroom as a community of students, but that sense of community extended beyond the classroom, throughout the school and into the greater community.

Working with Parents

Parents were also an important part of the community concept. Carol believed that all were representatives of Christ, working together. As family, church and school, all shared and worked toward a common goal. The values "that go on in the home" were reinforced in the school (Interview, Mar. 15). Carol readily had parents helping in the classroom. They and other adults were a regular part of the grade one classroom community. They helped daily with the editing process. Carol felt that adults needed to model reading and writing for the students. There had to be "time [for students] to work with more experienced language users whether it was an older student or a parent volunteer" (Carol's Journal, Jan. 23).

Believing that parents and school must work together meant that Carol considered the parents' wishes. The resource teacher worked closely with Carol in determining programs for students who were challenged academically. She initiated regular contact with the parents. One of the moms encouraged the teachers to "put pressure" on her child. The initiation of that plan resulted in a very frustrated child (Interview, Mar. 1). Coming back from the staff room one morning, Carol was relieved because Debbie's mom had suggested Debbie be retained. Debbie complained about being so frustrated with school and didn't want to go (My journal, Feb. 29). Another parent had informed Carol that her child "had better put his nose to the grind stone, with twenty minutes of homework (word study), some skating and then twenty more minutes of homework" (My journal, Feb. 29). Although Carol may not have agreed with the actions suggested, she believed the home and the school had to work together.

Carol's Understanding of the School's Mission Statement

When I asked Carol to talk about the school's mission statement, she began by saying that all were representatives of Christ working together as home, church and school toward the same goals. She continued:

> It seems totally natural to me [to work toward the same goals] and a lot of times I thought what if I taught in the public school where the values at home would be different than what my values are. Now (in the public school) you can't overtly talk about God, but there's no way that your values wouldn't come out in the way you treat the kids, in the way you discipline the kids, in the way you would teach your [curriculum]. It would still be part of you and a part of your teaching; you wouldn't label it ....You couldn't overtly be yourself. (Interview, Mar. 15)

Carol indicated that she felt fortunate that she could be "so much myself" at this school. The way she taught and disciplined the children received the parents support because parents and teachers shared the same values.

Summary

The research data revealed a number of themes which indicated Carol's vision of teaching. At no time did she say, "This is my mission statement", but it was apparent from participating in her classroom and observing her interaction in class, from talking with her and reading her journal, that there were facets of teaching which were components of her unarticulated vision of teaching. Her Christian belief system was the basis of her teaching. It was important to her that the learning experience was exciting for her grade one students. She possessed and displayed pedagogical insight in the way she set the tone of the classroom, structured the class, gave instructions, asked questions and "read" the class. Her learning activities were well planned using content purposefully, and making use of background knowledge and experience. Her respect for each student was expressed through both the learning and behavioral expectations as well as meeting the student's individual needs. Some ways in which this occurred were through allowing choices and providing redirection. The concept of community was important to Carol whether it came to expression in the classroom, the school, the parent community or the greater school community. The chapter concluded with Carol's verbal expression of the school's mission statement. The next chapter will look at the commonalties of the two case studies and compare these with the school's mission statement.

Chapter VI

THE TEACHERS' PRACTICE AND THE MISSION STATEMENT

Introduction

In the previous two chapters I documented the practices of two teachers and identified the themes prominent in their teaching. In this chapter I discuss the commonalties amongst these themes as well as the teachers' verbal articulation of the school's mission statement. The themes arising from the practice of the teachers will then be considered in light of the school's mission statement.

Common Themes

The Bible as The Basis

Both teachers' foundation was their belief in the Bible as the basis for life and teaching. Throughout history the Scriptures have been interpreted in various ways. These teachers' interpretation of the Bible comes from the tradition that is rooted in the Protestant Reformation. *Our World Belongs To God* gives a synopsis of that interpretation in the Preamble. The main points are as follows:

> As followers of Jesus Christ, living in this world -...we declare with joy and trust: Our world belongs to God! From the beginning ... until his kingdom fully comes, God keeps covenant forever.... The Spirit is at work, renewing the creation.... we join this struggle ... testing our times by the Spirit's sure Word.... God holds this world in sovereign love. He kept his promise sending Jesus into the world.... As covenant partners, called to faithful obedience, and set free for joyful praise, we offer our hearts and lives to do God's work in this world. With tempered impatience, eager to see injustice ended, we expect the Day of the Lord. (Christian Reformed Church, 1986)

As referenced in the previous chapter, Carol stated that it was "just basic" given that she was "teaching God's creation" and that "in everything we're teaching [it] centers around God and what He plans for us and where we are." She began her unit plans "talking about how it [the topic] fits into God's creation because that's what we're teaching first and foremost .... I usually introduce my unit with something from God's Word, or a story or parable tying in that everything is, everything we do here, is part of God's plan for us." She felt that it was "part of your [her] Christianity and it just comes" and is "a natural way to start off each one of the units" (Interview, Mar. 15).

Joy referred to following God's Word as "grassroots" when she said that teaching "always has to come back to - You try to teach the kids to follow God's Word. How are we going to do it? What is the best way to do it?" (Interview, July 20).

Time was given to study of the Bible. The grade five class engaged in an interesting study and discussion of the Israelites during the time of King David. Study of the Bible was also integrated into other subject areas. As an example, the reading about the "code of honor" in *The Castle in the Attic* led to the discussion and activity of the "whole armor of God" found in Ephesians 6: 10-17. The students created "rules of conduct for a Christian" which gave them direction for living together in the classroom.

Both teachers led the staff in devotions. The sincerity and integrity with which they led in devotions gave evidence of their own relationship with God and their understanding of responding to God in thankfulness. Joy's devotions focused on the comfort received from hope in Jesus Christ. Carol's devotions reflected on God's creation and His plan for humankind which evoked a sense of awe and amazement.

Classroom devotions were a part of the routine of each school day; beginning the day, in preparation for lunch, and at the close of the school day. Prayer was not just for the teacher and the students but was expanded to include their families and neighbors, their city, country and the world. Carol taught the grade one students that prayer was communication with God, modeled prayer for the children, and also taught them how to pray.

It was evident from the practice of both of the teachers that their faith was more than a personal faith; it was a faith that permeated their lives and thus had a bearing on their teaching practice. As Groome (1998) states, it is "the operative commitments from a faith perspective that undergird and permeate their teaching--the deep-down things that persons really believe and that shape how they educate" (p. 14). Faith affected how Joy and Carol used their own gifts and abilities, how they saw themselves and the students as serving, and in so doing, being a part of a community, how they respected each child, and how they applied their professional knowledge in response to God.

Using Their Gifts

Both of the teachers expressed the desire that the children develop and use their "God-given gifts". In their understanding children came with their own gifts from God and each was created to develop these in his or her own way. Joy made reference to Rusty as being gifted verbally and also having great ideas in his writing, to Janey and Anthony as having the potential as authors, to Ann as gaining a sense of independence, to some as having physical ability to run well, and to others as showing great determination and perseverance. She made reference to some as having the ability to relate well to others, to some as showing kindness, to one as having the ability to be at peace with himself and to others as showing initiative. At one point Joy made reference to the students being given talents. The New International Version Study Bible indicates that "the present day use of 'talent' to indicate an ability or gift is derived from this [Matthew 25: 14 - 28] parable" (Barker, 1995, p. 1476). It was in this Biblical context that Joy made reference to gifts and striving for excellence.

Carol also nurtured gifts in her students; gifts such as reading, writing, drawing, expressing verbally, solving problems, gaining greater independence, and gaining organizational skills. Stronks and Blomberg (1993) make reference to "God-given gifts", indicating "there is a spectrum of gifts that students use and extend through learning, including imagination and creativity, language competence, mathematical and spatial reasoning and ability, social perception and interaction, spiritual and moral discernment, and physical proficiency" (p. 20).

There was also evidence that Joy and Carol desired to develop their own gifts. Each used her own personal and professional knowledge to try to excel in her teaching and was confident in her teaching abilities. Joy's most emphatic declaration of developing her own gifts was when she said:

> God never called us to be mediocre. God never called us to be just average. He never called us just to be an OK Christian school. NEVER! And I just don't understand people who think it's OK to be mediocre. And I firmly believe God called us to be THE BEST that we can be. (Interview, July 20)

Realizing a deficiency in her program, Joy found an approach which more adequately met the Language Arts needs of the children. She also spoke with appreciation of working with teachers from her former school who had a "passion for teaching and were way ahead in their understanding of teaching" (My journal, Apr. 10).

Carol's desire to take courses and continually apply what she was learning to her practice of teaching, indicated her desire to develop her own gifts.

Examples were: Vygotsky's (1962) zone of proximal development, Harste's (1986) shared reading and writing, and Carol's response to university colleagues' discussion of whole language. She not only talked about, but also showed responsibility, in planning what she was going to teach. In one of her interviews, Carol spoke specifically about "the gifts you just have to have in order to be a teacher" (Mar. 15). They included: taking initiative, setting the tone, initiating discussion, knowing how to ask questions, being aware of what the students were doing, having the ability to refocus the group, and "reading their faces". More than once she made reference to the need to have a purpose in teaching.

Each teacher not only talked about, but also demonstrated integrating her Christian point of view into the units she taught. Trusting their own practical knowledge and understanding their own life histories, the teachers made decisions to create possibilities from the curriculum texts which best met the needs of the students, but also reflected the school's supporting community (Connelly & Clandinin, 1988). Carol did so as she used her rich background of children's literature, as well as the structure of paired reading and the subsequent interaction to enrich the students' verbal and written language. Her understanding of how to ask questions of the children served to enhance their learning and build confidence in the students. Building on her experience and knowledge, Carol purposefully planned for the students considering their abilities and interests, and also created learning situations so that the students were attentive to their learning tasks.

Joy's background knowledge of curriculum and curricular expectations, literature and writer's workshop allowed her to plan for and pace her students so that the classroom was alive with learning activities. Her commitment to engage the children in their learning was evident both in the interesting centers and in the student's materials geared to various levels of learning. Both teachers used their gifts of teaching to serve others, recognizing that this was a gift from God.

Serving in Community

"What is this school about? What is our image of the learner? What makes us unique? How do we work together ...?" (Sergiovanni, 1992, p. 47) According to Sergiovanni, these are questions which can be answered when schools are understood as learning communities. The school as community is concerned with "shared purpose, building relationship, and creating an atmosphere where people act out of deep personal concern for one another and their mutual welfare" (Wallace, 1997, p. 171). Sergiovanni believes that the heart of a school as a moral community is its collective world view which operates at two levels; the basic level and the temporal level (Sergiovanni, 1992, p. 108) The basic level is composed of the deeply held beliefs about the nature and structure of the universe and one's place in it. The temporal level includes:

> deeply held conceptions of how the school works; the nature of human motivation, power, and authority; how decisions are made; assumptions of how students learn, grow and develop; and the nature of the process of schooling itself. These elements comprise the subject matter for building covenant. (p. 108)

Both Carol and Joy saw the need to operate as a community and established a sense of community within their classrooms. The classroom community was a microcosm of the larger school community. Their classrooms provided the setting in which each tried to answer the previous questions in a practical way. In both classrooms the students worked together in their learning activities. In the grade one class, the partnered reading, the "Say Something" activity, writing together and peer editing, all helped the children realize that they were not alone; they had someone else that they could help but also someone else that they could depend on for help. The children often worked together as a group on Language Arts assignments. It was an expectation that the children would talk and work with one another. As they learned together they were respectful of one another, were attentive to the responses of their classmates whether the responses were verbal, written or graphic, and knew how to be an appreciative audience. The grade one children learned the joy of serving each other, contributing their special gifts for the communal good of others and "ultimately working as team in service to God" (Fowler, 1979, p. 36).

Parents and adult volunteers were a vital part of the classroom community as they assisted students in their reading and writing. Both the grade one and grade six students benefited as they together shared, read, wrote, and prayed when they combined classes once a week. The interaction of the grade one students with the grade six students, as well as grade eight students, fostered a greater sense of understanding outside the classroom as well. Participation in the "Penny Carnival" not only gave the students a sense of the whole school community, but was also an effort to reach beyond their school to others.

Joy's classroom also demonstrated a sense of community in the way the students helped one another in learning. Recognizing their different gifts, they were often placed in groups to be of assistance to others in their group. They were aware that everyone in the group was responsible for the learning of others. As partners they served as a listening ear, an idea generator or a peer editor in the writing process. Joy purposefully helped the students recognize that what they said could either build up or tear down community. Their cooperative learning enhanced the students' academic learning, social interaction, self-esteem and acceptance of differing academic giftedness (Osterman, 2000; Slavin, 1983). The children learned to serve God by communally using everyone's gifts to value and complement each other (Fowler, 1979). The grade five students' sense of community was expanded to include the grade two class where they took a leadership role as they read with them and worked through various Language Arts activities once a week. The grade five students' participation in, and leading of the elementary assemblies, were ways in which they experienced the school community. Their devotions and their social studies discussions helped them to see themselves as part of a larger community and to determine ways in which they could enhance the larger community. Parental support was evident by some classroom assistance, field trip involvement, response to assignments and being an integral partner when redirection of student behavior was necessary.

Each of the teachers succeeded in establishing a strong sense of community within the classroom and created opportunities to enlarge the students sense of community beyond the classroom. Children were made to feel gifted and needed; they had a contribution to make and a part to play. The teachers tried hard to reverse "the qualities of competitiveness, unilateral exchange in learning and alienation" (Greene, 1998, p. 263).

Respecting The Child

> Teachers accept students as having intrinsic worth as images of God who are able to fulfill meaningful roles in the classroom community.... Within schools that are covenant communities, teachers and students show heartfelt respect, compassion, and support of each other. (Stronks & Blomberg, 1993, p. 26)

Both teachers not only spoke of respecting the child, but tried to show this through their actions. Joy spoke of wanting the children to feel good about themselves, to do well, to "bloom and blossom", to see the gifts God had given them and to use those gifts. She emphasized that in order to help a child grow, you have to accentuate the successes of the child. By determining the child's level of learning, and building from that point, the student more readily recognized his or her capabilities. Joy helped some to be more confident in their abilities and encouraged others to develop greater independence. The overall atmosphere in the class was one of acceptance, valuing of self and others and recognizing God's love for each person.

Carol listened to the children, affirmed them, valued their contributions and encouraged them to have opinions of their own. She accommodated individual learning levels so that the child was enabled to reach his or her potential. She wanted each child to realize the uniqueness of his or her own learning journey and to respect that of their fellow students. She expected children to do their best and provided open-ended activities so that could be realized. She taught to the needs of the child and recruited other adults to assist the children in reading and writing. Carol was sensitive to the needs of children, encouraging those who were afraid or timid, and motivated others to use their leadership skills. Teaching the students how to pray, leading in prayer and providing opportunity to pray were ways in which she helped them grow in their understanding of being God's children.

These teachers sensed their "Christian obligation to provide classroom conditions in which each child could flourish as an individual" (Van Dyk, 2000, p. 219). Each student was seen as unique and differently gifted. The teachers expressed deep concern and care for each one of their students.

Using Professional Knowledge in Response to God

As the teachers incorporated teaching techniques acquired through their professional learning, they made accommodations for individual students. Techniques are often thought of as something objective that can be employed without the need for any particular quality of life on the part of the one employing them. According to Greene (1998), a Christian educator not only recognizes that nothing exists outside the creative and sustaining power of God's Word, but that we also bear God's image. He states:

> this means we are privileged and required to respond to Him in whatever we learn about the world, including teaching techniques. Teaching techniques are not merely objective skills to which teachers can add his or her own value system. They are created, hence they reveal God. They call on us for a particular kind of life in relation to God. (p. 214)

The teachers used their professional knowledge and skills as they served the children, offering them opportunities to understand their own learning process and to respond to others, as well as their Creator. They used techniques which they felt allowed the students to most capably respond to that which they were learning. To encourage the students to use the gift of language to communicate effectively, Joy used the "dome of silence", peer conferencing, teacher - student conferencing, and "state of the class" record keeping system. In studying the novel, *Castle in the Attic*, she helped the students make applications to their own classroom situations. Centers were used to meet the varying knowledge and skill levels. Group work facilitated student interaction and understanding of inter-personal interaction as well as the curriculum topic being researched.

Carol incorporated the "Say Something" technique to help the students who were at various levels of development in their speaking, reading and writing, to further explore their language. Having learned of Vygotsky's "zone of proximal development", Carol often demonstrated or modeled for the students, encouraging them to take a risk and expand their learning. She learned how to make masks so that the students could expand their creativity in the unit on wolves. When she used drama with the students, she was not fully prepared and therefore made that admission to the students. That appeared to be an indication that she felt she knew she was not fully honoring the students at that point. Taking into consideration, the students' levels of learning and interests, both teachers provided choices for the children, had expectations for them and redirected them when that was necessary.

Providing Choices

As the teachers incorporated teaching techniques acquired through their professional learning, they made accommodations for individual students, providing opportunities to honor the individuality of each child. Both Carol and Joy offered choices to their students. Each teacher offered the kinds and number of choices appropriate for their grade level. Choices were given to the grade one students in the books they read and in the topics of some of their writing assignments. They could also choose how they read with their partner in their partnered reading situation: each reading a page, reading aloud at the same time, or interchangeably reading a sentence. They also had choice in how they verbally responded to their reading. Examples of limited choice were: the partner with whom they read or wrote, the other members in their group with whom they worked, and what they would write or talk about following the reading of their books. Choices were also given in their unit studies activities. Alternatives were available for students academically unable to handle an activity involving the whole class. Carol felt that by offering choices, she was allowing the students to take ownership of their learning. The realization that students have choices allows them "to develop a sense of ownership and responsibility about learning ... and we [they] have to think critically about those choices as we [they] sift through and weigh a variety of information" (Harste, 1988, p. 243).

Joy provided many and varied choices to her grade five students to accommodate their pace of learning, their academic level and their interests. Her students also had opportunities to choose their reading books and their way of responding to their reading. They could set their own reading goal but had to confirm the goal with Joy so that it fell within the set guidelines. Choice was offered in the wide variety of activities which allowed the students to demonstrate their learning in unit studies and other curriculum areas. Very often the students were allowed to pick their own learning partners, but there were also times when this was determined for them. Joy also provided alternative exercises for a student if the student was not capable of dealing with the demands of an assignment given to the whole class.

The kinds and number of choices offered to the students were appropriate to their interest and academic level. The teachers offered the choices to the students within the classroom structure of meeting specific educational objectives. Open-ended choices allowed the students to maximize their learning potential.

Having Expectations

Both teachers had high expectations of their students in terms of their learning and of their behavior. Both expected that their students would do their best. Joy clearly stated her belief that God called us to do and be our best. She expected that her students would strive for excellence, produce quality work, work hard and take pride in their work upon its completion. She used the word "brain stretching" when she wanted the students to extend themselves in their thinking. As Joy walked around the class, she encouraged the students to do their work neatly, meet the goals of the assignment, and to pace themselves so as to complete the task on time. Carol had similar expectations for her grade one students. She wanted them to do their best and meet the challenges which she gave them. Their writing was to make sense, be completed neatly and be spelled as accurately as their ability allowed. She expected that the students would take pride in their work.

Behavioral expectations were evident in both classrooms. Carol gave frequent reminders that the students were not to talk while she was teaching. The students were to be seated facing her, with their hands to themselves and ready to listen in preparation for a whole class direct teaching situation. She expected them to respect each other and their classroom. A daily expectation was that the students would talk and share with each other in a structured setting to help each other learn. She counted on the students to be reliable and to tell the truth. Joy also expected that there would be no talking from the students while she was teaching or giving instructions. Although they could talk to one another while involved in their learning activities, she expected them to be on task. She often reminded the less organized of how to become organized, indicating that organization of their learning materials was an expectation. She expected kind and loving interaction among the children and anticipated that they would serve one another by helping each other learn.

Both of these teachers had high expectations of their students, anticipating that each student would use their God-given gifts in ways that would help them reach their potential. The behavioral expectations not only served to enhance their academic possibilities but also to serve the others in the classroom.

Redirecting the Child

The students were given a variety of choices which allowed for positive interaction among students, as well as on-task behavior. Some students exhibited a choice not to contribute to the positive learning environment and in those instances both teachers believed that redirection was necessary for their students. In redirecting, the teacher intercepted the student's action and sent the students on a more productive path than the one which was currently being pursued. Because of the age and personalities of the grade one students, Carol's glance, eye contact, or words encouraged children to discontinue or change the inappropriate behavior in which they were engaged. If further redirection was needed, the child was separated from the group. Carol always talked to the child about the unsatisfactory behavior and the change which was required before returning to the group. If a number of children were involved in a situation such as play fighting, the discussion took place in the hall, away from their classmates. She found it beneficial to listen to all sides of the story before taking corrective action.

Joy most often responded to unacceptable behavior by questioning whether the action was a wise choice, or simply commenting that what was done was not a wise choice. She gave her students several warnings before further action was taken, but sometimes the number of warnings given was dependent on the child and his or her present disposition. She also separated the misbehaving student from the group, and eventually to the hallway. As with Carol, Joy and the child resolved the issue and there was a pledge of changed behavior before the student returned to the classroom. When a group displayed offensive behavior, Joy took time to sort out the issue, had the students admit their part in it, seek forgiveness if necessary and indicate an intended change. Although Joy's desire was that eventually the student would independently make "wise" decisions in their relationships with others, she also used each incident as a time to redirect them into "good and upright" thinking. Although I was not party to the discussions with the students in these situations, I believe Joy directed the students to think about what God would have them do in the circumstance. Her response in one of the students' journals gives indication of this:

> It must be hard to be a kid that just doesn't fit in anywhere. It must be really hard to feel good about yourself. I think Jesus really relies on us

> to show people like Gary [the character in the book] that God loves them and so do we.

Both Carol and Joy responded to what they considered inappropriate or misdirected behavior with verbal and non-verbal responses. Many times the redirection was of the nature that the child retained his or her self esteem. Often the teacher held a discussion with a student or group of students in privacy and sought their side of the story. Students were encouraged to change their behavior, make restitution if possible, and focus on what action would serve God and others. Love and care was evident in the redirection.

Summary of Themes

As indicated in Chapter III, the data was read and reread to determine the themes. The categories which came to the foreground in the practice of the teachers were: The Bible as the Basis, Using Their Gifts, Serving in the Community, Respecting the Child, and Using Professional Knowledge in Response to God. These themes may be found in any classroom, but the basis from which these teachers operated had a major impact on how these themes came to expression. Their actions were grounded in their world view, which they derived from their interpretation of the Bible. This interpretation came from the "reformed" understanding of the Scriptures. This will be explored to a greater extent later in this chapter as the themes are related to the school's mission statement.

Articulating the Mission Statement

At the time of the research a new, more concise mission statement was being formulated by the teachers, with eventual ratification by the community and school board. This was felt to be necessary as initial discussions were underway to determine the viability of the school's inclusion in a larger school system. Joy explained to me some of the components. At the time I was working in her classroom, the staff had begun their work on the mission statement. Joy had asked her students for contributions to the process and therefore had taken the time to explain a mission statement to her students. She also indicated that the staff had some of their professional days devoted to giving input to the school's mission statement. My conversations with Carol about the mission statement occurred prior to the staff involvement in the articulations of the revised mission statement. Both teachers had been with the school for a number of years. The 1993 version of the mission statement was in place at the time of the research. Both teachers articulated that as a Christian school, the school was working with the parents to educate the students.

Themes in Relationship to the Mission Statement

The school society which operates the Christian school in which this research was conducted, is based in a Christian world view. The mission statement of the school is a rather lengthy document (Appendix B). The summary, as found on p. 60 of this document, states that the Bible must be the starting point in nurturing this world view. It is though an understanding of the Biblical story of Creation, Sin and Redemption that education has meaning. God not only created the world, but continues to maintain it and is revealed in creation. Sin entered the world, but through the victory of Jesus Christ, gives hope; hope that upon Christ's return all things will be made new. Although the world remains troubled and flawed, the Holy Spirit of God works faith in people and inspires them to live in ways that acknowledge the Lordship of Jesus Christ and to respond in thanksgiving and service. Formal education finds its place within this broad framework.

This framework has several key concepts: understanding oneself in relationship to God, understanding oneself in relationship to others, and understanding oneself in relationship to the creation. The concept of understanding ourselves in relationship to God embodies the awareness that people are created by God as image-bearers and are restored through Christ. The third concept, understanding oneself in relationship to the creation, recognizes that God created the world and that the world or creation is restored through Christ. Each of these three concepts anticipates a response on the part of God's people.

Interwoven in the practice of the two teachers was a framework which helped both the teachers and their students understand their relationship to God, others and the whole of creation. The themes, which were evident in the practice of the teachers, will be related to each of the concepts of the Biblical framework in the remainder of this chapter.

Understanding Oneself in Relationship to God

The mission statement of the school states that the school "is to provide schooling shaped by the Christian faith as interpreted by the Reformed understanding of Scripture which testifies that Christ is Lord of all" (Appendix A). As indicated in the theme "The Bible as the Basis", the Scriptures gave direction to the teachers' personal lives as well as to their actions in the classroom. Both teachers gave evidence of the Bible having a central place in their lives. They made reference to God as faithful, everlasting and unchanging. The regularities they depended on in their daily lives were because of God's faithfulness in ordinary things of creation. The awareness of God's nearness, as well as interest in ordinary things, including ourselves, both initiated and deepened their communion with Him (Greene, 1998). Carol indicated that God's creation was the substance of the curriculum and that "everything we're teaching centers around God and what He plans for us ... everything we do here, is part of God's plan for us. It's part of the way God makes us and it's part of what God's given us" (Interview, Mar. 15). This was another way of saying "all things have been created through him [Christ] and for him", and "that in him [Christ] all things hold together" (Colossians 1:16, 17).

Joy's love and care for the students was evident in the way she respected them as individuals and made every effort to meet their differing academic, social, emotional and spiritual needs. She wanted the students with whom she worked to realize that God loved them, and her desire for them was that they would love themselves for who they were; just the way God created them. The themes, "Using Their Gifts", "Respecting the Child" and "Using Professional Knowledge in Response to God" which were evident in the teachers' practice, supported this concept of understanding oneself in relationship to God.

Nurturing the Understanding of Oneself in Relationship to God and Encouraging Response

The mission statement indicates that it is the responsibility of the school , "to develop the student's knowledge and understanding of their relationship to God...: - to create opportunities for action and service" (Appendix A). The theme, "The Bible as the Basis", found in the practice of the teachers, clearly supported the nurturing of an understanding of "oneself in relationship to God". Devotions were a part of each class's daily routine. The teachers not only led the students in prayer but also gave them opportunity to participate in praise and thanksgiving to God. The care with which these activities were introduced indicated a cognizance of the stages of faith development. The gradual expression of faith begins with observing and copying others, exploring and testing in an atmosphere which is experienced as worthy of trust (Westerhoff, 1980). It is not only in the words that were spoken, but also within the classroom atmosphere, that the children were given an opportunity to grow in their faith.

Some of the Bible study and devotions specifically centered on encouraging the students to respond to God. The students' creation of praise selections, singing and prayer indicated this response. Students in both classes were invited to respond in prayer, rather than forced to take their turn. Encouraging the children to use their gifts to their full potential was another expression of responding to God.

The themes of "Respecting the Child" and "Using Professional Knowledge in Response to God" further contributed to the nurturing of an understanding of the students' relationship to God. Both teachers took time to work out conflicts in the classroom, seeking an authentic response rather than a quick "I'm sorry". Joy encouraged her students to make "wise" decisions when choosing their course of behavior. Recognizing that learning to be wise, in the biblical sense, was a process and that it was a difficult distinction for her students to make, she helped them by reading books which illustrated making choices from a biblical point of view (Interview, July 20).

Created by God as Image-bearers

"Children are created in the image of God and deserve respect," (Appendix A) states the mission statement. When we come to an understanding as to who we are in relationship to God, we again have to understand this in light of the Biblical Story; we are created by God, redeemed through Jesus Christ and called to live a life of thankfulness in response to Him. Many of the themes which came to expression in the teachers' practice relate to the child being created as special and unique; an image-bearer God. The implications of this are reflected in the mission statement:

> Our children have been created in the image of God, capable of learning and obeying the truth of God's Word and His creation. Although sin has deminished that ability, we believe that in Christ is all the wisdom,

> knowledge and love necessary to restore them as God's imagers, worthy of respect. As forgiven and forgiving imagers of God, students - like their teachers - have inherent responsibility: love experienced becomes the basis for love demonstrated. Embodiment of faith requires imitation. The wisdom of the ages tells us that children and young people are influenced by observing those around them (Appendix B, 3. 3).

The theme "Using Professional Knowledge in Response to God" and "Respecting the Child" indicated that the teachers had an understanding that the students were God's image-bearers. Many activities were open-ended so that the students could respond at their own level of understanding. Both teachers determined the individual level of learning, accentuated what the student already knew, and encouraged and enabled the individual to move toward their potential. Encouragement and affirmation of the individual's responses to learning by the teacher and fellow students allowed the child to feel accepted and valued. When working together in a group, the aim was that everyone's individual gifts were acknowledged and required at various stages of the process. It was also recognized and supported that not all gifts and talents were academic in nature and therefore others were highlighted as well. These were gifts such as getting along with others, being at peace with oneself, or responding in positive ways. Both teachers recognized that fear on the part of the child was something that had to be faced and managed with sensitivity. In these ways students not only learned the area to be studied, but also understood themselves as unique individuals in relationship to God.

Restored Through Christ

The teachers' need to redirect the children related to the part of the mission statement which states, "All creation, including humankind, has fallen under the curse of sin but is continually being redeemed through Jesus Christ ...

restored to fellowship with Him in a life of thanksgiving and service" (Appendix A). Sin and brokenness was acknowledged, and emphasis was placed on a restored relationship through Jesus Christ. Both classrooms were places where caring and comfort were evident. Although students were reprimanded and redirected they experienced forgiveness and restoration. Forgiveness breaks down hostility, loneliness and fear that separate us, and brings us into a togetherness "born from mutual trust and acceptance, and the freedom to be ourselves in our uniqueness and beauty; the freedom to exercise our gifts. We are no longer contained and held back by fear, prejudices, or the need to prove ourselves" (Vanier, 1998). This sense of forgiveness through Christ was evident in the way the classroom community functioned when the students did not follow directions or when the sense of community broke down. Students were redirected in a way in which healing or building up of relationships could take place.

The need for repeated redirection indicated that Joy was aware the students did not always do what was right and pleasing. Her desire was that she could instill within the students a sense of wisdom. The Biblical meaning is "to act rightly". Her hope was that through the instruction and interaction in the class, the students would learn to think independently and be problem solvers. She taught her students how to be discerning when facing issues in life; to determine which action was pleasing to God and which was not.

Discussions about forgiveness provided assurance that Christ covered up the wrong they "*did* so that we [they] could rediscover the persons we [they] *are*" (Smedes, 1996, p. 126). The positive functioning learning community was meant to provide the best learning environment for all.

Responding To Him

As stated in the previous section, the mission statement indicated that "God's people are born again and restored to fellowship with Him in a life of thanksgiving and service" (Appendix A). The theme "The Bible as the Basis" supported this concept. The teachers often reminded the students that they belonged to God, were loved by God, and were special to Him. Jesus' greatest and first commandment was, " You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind." The second was, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself" (Matthew. 22: 37 - 39).

Other Bible passages give a picture of love in action. "As God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, clothe yourself with compassion, kindness, humility, meekness and patience. Bear with one another...forgive each other.... And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts" (Colossians 3: 12 -15). Galatians 2:22 speaks of the fruit of the Spirit as love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, and self control. The Bible also speaks of being "doers of the word and not merely hearers" (James 1: 22) and also that faith and action go together (James 2: 22). God's love was exemplified in these two teachers as they related to the students, as they respecting them as the individuals God created, and as they provided an environment where love was a prime ingredient.

The teachers served as examples by responding in thanksgiving and service by using their God-given gifts. Joy used the words, "God called us to be THE BEST that we can be", whereas Carol gave evidence of her own high standards of teaching through possessing, desiring and displaying pedagogical insight. The teachers' love for God and the children, and their service to God and the children were evident as they created a positive, healthy and joyful learning environment. This was evident in the themes, "Using Their Gifts, and "Using Professional Knowledge in Response to God".

Understanding Oneself in Relationship to Others

The themes, "Serving in Community" and "Professional Knowledge in Response to God" indicated that the classroom community was an opportune setting for the students to develop value judgments grounded in their relationships to others (Appendix B). In both classes it was expected that children would work together to help one another in their learning. This did not mean that students were not accountable for their own learning, but that each student had opportunity to assist others. The partnered reading and writing activities were structured methods of fostering this serving, but it naturally extended into other learning activities. Because the teachers had clearly set out the learning tasks, the students knew what to do, what resources to use, and who to go to for assistance. A busy noise filled both classrooms as the students attended to their learning tasks. Students valued the gifts of others as they together wrote, peer edited, read, held reading conferences or worked to complete assignments, discovering the necessary concepts for a unit of study. These projects often involved a variety of ways of responding to the topic so students had opportunity to benefit from the gifts of others as they completed their work. Their talking and working together indicated a respect of one another and an interest in what each had learned. Competition did not appear to be an element in either of the classrooms. Students from each classroom expanded their knowledge of themselves, others and the world as they worked with children from another classroom on a weekly basis. Students realized that their God given gifts were to be shared with others. Children shared their gifts of leadership, learning and friendship as they worked with students from another grade; serving in ways differing from those they may have used in their own classroom. There was fun and laughter in the classrooms and expressions of genuine appreciation as students shared what they had produced or experienced. As the students participated in school wide assemblies or events they served other students, the school community and members of the greater Christian school community.

Understanding Oneself in Relationship to Creation

Created by God

Although the teachers complied with the requirements of Alberta Learning's curriculum topics, they recognized their freedom within the framework. Both teachers saw their topics of curriculum study as a part of the world created and upheld by God; an affirmation of the Basis of the Mission Statement. Both referred to the sense of the hallowed being all around them and not only opening their eyes, but also the eyes of their students to see the ordinary of life as sacred and worthy of respect (Howard, 1979, Palmer, 1999). As Joy's class studied the landscape and regions of Canada, this was highlighted. When the student's discussed natural resources, they were encouraged to examine their responsibilities as caretakers of the gifts provided by God. Language Arts was seen as a tool for students' self-expression and Social Studies, as an avenue to look at issues using "biblical wisdom" (Interview, May 1). In Carol's grade one class, God's creation and care of the animal kingdom was the backdrop to the study of wolves. The awe inspired by the way the wolves operated as a unique species, was not only conveyed to the students, but also served to prompt further exploration of the way the animals lived. Carol indicated that in planning her units, she began with Bible passages that made reference to the unit to be studied. She felt that talking about God and His plan was a natural way of starting each of her thematic units as it was a natural expression of her Christianity (Interview, Mar. 15). She spoke of both the study of family and the seasons as being a symbolic representation of life with God. "The creation that underlies the school curriculum is rich in lessons about the love of God if we have the heart to watch for them" (Greene, 1998, p. 159).

Restored by Christ

The mission statement states that creation and humankind have been redeemed, therefore people can live in hope that the world belongs to God. The theme, "The Bible as the Basis" most clearly expresses the teachers' understanding of this concept. Through their practice they encouraged the students to also gain this understanding. The devotions that Joy shared with the staff and with her class were an expression of that hope in Jesus Christ.

Responding to God

In order to develop value judgments grounded in the understanding of the world around the students, the teachers offered a variety of ways of responding to the topic of study so that each student could choose their own way of using their gifts. This came to expression in the themes, "Using Their Gifts", "Using Professional Knowledge in Response to God", and "Serving in Community".

Creation, the substance of the curriculum, was studied in ways that allowed the students to respond to their Creator, both individually and communally. Through the student activities which focused on an area of the creation, they experienced the "many-sidedness" of creation which called for a "many-sided response" from the children (Stronks & Blomberg, 1993, p. 236). In the study of topics such as the regions of Canada, castles, chemistry, human relationships, and writing, the grade five students used their own experiences or the books they had read, to respond in many different ways. The grade one students learned about wolves, thermometers, others cultures, and communication, in a variety of ways being made aware that each was a gift from God.

As Joy made clear, she wanted her students to respond with the biblical sense of wisdom; to respond obediently or to act in conformity with God's will. It was to that end that some curriculum topics were focused. The students were encouraged to think about decisions they would make as Christians. The teachers anticipated a response exhibiting characteristics similar to that described by Stronks and Blomberg (1993):

> In their school encounters with the dynamics of life in God's creation, students are called to respond with wisdom and knowledge, with discernment and creativity, with playfulness and perseverance, and above all, with love and compassion. We want such student response to be freely given and authentic, but at the same time, we wish the response to reflect the fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 5; Eph. 4 - 5). (p. 34 - 35)

Summary

This chapter focused on the themes which came to expression in the practice of both of the teachers and these themes were then examined in light of the school's mission statement. The theme which was dominant in the teaching practice of both of the teachers was "The Bible as the Basis". The others themes which were evident in both of their practice was encouraging the students to use their gifts, serving in community, respecting the child and using professional knowledge in response to God. A synopsis of the Biblical interpretation from the Reformed perspective was presented. The themes were discusses in relation to the mission statement. In the next chapter I will summarize the study, return to the research questions, the research experience and also discuss the implications of the study.

Chapter VII

SUMMARY, REFLECTIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

Introduction

This chapter will present a summary of the study including the background and purpose of the study, the significance of the study, an overview of the research site, the methodology, and data collection and analysis. This will be followed by the conclusions related to the research. The personal reflections of the researcher, suggestions for further research and implications from the research conclude the chapter.

Summary

Background of the Study

My nurturing in the Christian faith, my family background, and my experience as a teacher and a principal in independent Christian schools, has impressed upon me the importance of the vision and mission of the school. Had this not been important to the parents who started the independent Christian Schools in Canada, these schools would no longer be in existence today. Although my family history with Christian schools can be traced back to the beginning of the previous century, the Christian School movement in the Netherlands began in the mid 1800's. It was in a Dutch immigrant community, which held a Calvinist Christian world view that the first non-Catholic Christian day school was established in Alberta in 1945. More than fifty years later these parentally governed Christian schools continue to operate.

Christian educators, in their desire to improve their practice, have discussed the importance of the school's vision. It was out of these discussions that Barth's (1990) questions about the school's vision as it relates to school reform, took on greater significance for me. Of all of Barth's questions the one which most closely related to this study was, "How is vision translated into practice" (p. 154)?

Related Literature

Everyone has a world view or a perspective on life. One's vision of education is related to one's world view. World views describe what we believe about the nature and purpose of reality, about human beings, knowledge, and life in society. It is our world view or *Weltanschauung* that colors the way we see the world. Christianity was the world view which was dominant in European thought prior to the Enlightenment. Although Christianity influenced the early scientists, the scientific world view became predominant during the age of modernity. By establishing human reason as the measure of all truth, Descartes' philosophy "eventually rendered God irrelevant" (Colson & Pearcey, 1999, p. 119). Postmodernism has questioned the grand narratives indicating that the scientific world view is not capable of answering the important questions of life.

Several voices in the area of school reform have encouraged an examination of world view which influences the teaching in our schools. Sergiovanni (1992) in his work on school reform indicated the necessity of school covenants based on a collective world view which included a deep conviction about the nature and purpose of human existence, conceptions of knowledge, the nature of human beings, the structure of human relationships, and morality.

Alberta Learning, in recent years, has incorporated a "Vision and Beliefs" section in the annual school report. This is a belief statement which includes the values of the school system. Most schools today display their vision and mission statements openly. These indicate what the school stands for, and what it hopes to achieve.

The present concept of vision and mission statements were dominant in the area of business prior to gaining prominence in the area of school reform. School reform emphasized a collective vision for the school and the necessity of the principal or administrator's vision, and to a lesser degree, the vision of the teacher. Research has focused on the vision setting process, and more recently on the impact that the school's vision has on programs. However, the restructuring of schools, which may include vision setting, does not necessarily lead to implications for teaching. Barth (1990) raised a number of questions about the vision of the school, concluding with one that affects the teacher, "How is the vision translated into practice" (p. 154)?

Purpose of the Study

As I return to the research questions I think back to the original query which prompted my research. The query raised at the meeting of the board of the Christian School where I served as a principal was, "Are our teachers 'reformed' in their vision?" As indicated in the opening chapter, another way of stating that question was, "Are the teachers operating out of a Calvinist Christian world view, one on which the schools were founded?" That question related not only to the world view, but also to the vision of the school.

This query encouraged me to focus on the vision and mission of the school. More specifically I chose to explore how the vision of an independent Christian school influenced the practice of two of the teachers teaching in the school and also to determine the relationship between the teacher's personal vision and the collective vision of the school.

Significance of the Study

The concept of vision has always been of key importance to the Christian School because without a particular vision, there would be no reason for the school's existence. Vision has been the topic of collegial discussions, summer courses and conventions for teachers, principals, and administrators of Christian Schools International in recent years. The Christian Schools continue to focus on the importance of vision, albeit their reason for the focus may be different from that of other schools. The Christian school's purpose to acknowledge and serve God in all aspects of schooling remains foundational. For education in general, the business model and current government requirements may have had a greater impact on the emphasis on a school's vision. As indicated in Chapter 2, one of the emphasis of school reform was a focus on the vision of the school. In some instances government grants were dependent on the articulation of the school's vision.

Christian education has had "vision" as a focus for a considerable length of time. Comparing this length of time, to the more recent developments and focus on vision in schools in general, there are lessons which can be learned from this study; both for Christian education and education in general. In recent years a number of Christian Schools have become part of the public school jurisdictions. These jurisdictions have also welcomed other schools which operate out of a particular vision or world view. In order to remain faithful to their particular vision of education, those in leadership roles in these particular schools, may have to consider how their school's practice reflects the vision of their particular school. As indicated previously in Chapter 2, Barth (1990) raised several questions about vision. He indicated that "exploration of these questions offer rich possibilities for researchers, consultants, academics, and school leaders who would contribute to this unusual route toward school reform" (p. 154). Insight will be gained and further questions will arise from this study which will affect our understanding of education in general.

Research Site

The independent Christian school in which the research was conducted was one of three schools operated by a parent governed Christian School Society. The society had been in existence for over fifty years. This school was also affiliated with an international association of Christian Schools. The urban school included kindergarten to grade nine and had a population of approximately 300 students. All of the teachers at the school received their certification from Alberta Learning. The school integrated the Christian perspective into the curriculum prescribed by Alberta Learning for all schools.

The study was conducted in the grade one and the grade five classrooms. The grade one teacher had been teaching in the Christian schools for twelve years at various grade levels in both single and combined grade situations. The grade five teacher had taught for six years in a variety of part time and full time positions in single grade situations in both the public and Christian Schools.

Methodology

A case study, as defined by Creswell (1998), is an "exploration of a 'bounded system' or a case (or multiple cases) over time through detailed, in-depth data collection involving multiple sources of information rich in context" (p. 61). According to Merriam (1988), the qualitative case study exhibits the following characteristics: it is particularistic, descriptive, heuristic, and inductive. It is particularistic in that the study focuses on a particular situation, event, program or phenomenon representing or revealing something important about it. It is descriptive in that the end product is a "thick" description of the phenomenon interpreting the data in terms of the cultural norms, community values and attitudes. It is heuristic because the study illuminates the reader's understanding of the phenomenon under study; bringing new meaning, extending the reader's experience or confirming what is known. It is inductive in that the case study mainly relies on inductive reasoning. Generalizations, concepts or hypotheses emerge from the data which is grounded in the context.

The research methodology chosen for this study was that of case study. It was particularistic in that its focus was the practice of two teachers in two different classrooms in an independent Christian school. The study yielded "thick" description of the data which was interpreted in terms of the school community's values and attitudes. It is heuristic in that the study illuminated the understanding of the teachers' practice in light of the school's vision and confirmed what was assumed to be happening. The generalizations emerged from the data.

As the research questions dealt with both the "how" and the "what" of the teachers' practice, the case study methodology was the best fit for this research. Researchers in the area of methodology (Merriam, 1988; Mertens, 1998; Yin, 1994) indicate that the most important criteria for differentiating among the various research methodologies one could use to study a topic, is to consider the research questions being asked. In general, "what" questions may be exploratory, in which instance the case study is appropriate. "How" and "why" questions are also more explanatory and also suited to the use of case studies.

Data Collection and Analysis

Data from this study included field notes, journal notes and transcriptions collected in my role as participant observer and interviewer. Documents, journals, artifacts and video tapes also contributed to the data. As a participant observer, which according to Guba and Lincoln (1981) is the most sophisticated data gathering instrument, I was able to see things first hand. I was able to listen, question and probe, using my knowledge and expertise in interpreting what was observed. I was much more than a disinterested observer because my teaching experience of more than twenty years had been in Christian schools. My desire and interest has been to see the vision or philosophy of Christian education come to expression in the classroom. It was difficult, even impossible, to separate myself to become an impartial observer. My interpretation prompted questions during the interview process and further investigation as I returned to the classroom. "Participant observation" was the major means of collecting data. It, combined with interviewing and document analysis, allowed for a holistic interpretation of that which was studied (Merriam, 1988). An observed incident, routine or behavior in the classroom was the initiative for my asking of open-ended interpretive questions during the interview. I interviewed the teachers to find out from them the things that I could not observe directly. The interviews gave insight into feelings, thoughts and intentions as well as that which happened prior to my observation. The purpose of the interview was to see things from the teachers' perspective.

Other sources of data included documents, particularly the school's mission statement found in the school's policy handbook, historical documents, a journal kept by one of the teachers, transcripts from a previous project in which these teachers participated, and writing done by the students. A video tape served as a visual reminder of the setting as well as the interactions of the teachers with their students.

Data collection and analysis was an on-going process, but the analysis became more intense once all the data was collected and put into written form. As the data from each teacher was repeatedly read and organized, I continually tried to make sense of the data in light of the research questions, and jotted notes in the margins. Patterns of the teachers' actions or the ideas they emphasized, began to emerge. From these I formed categories. These categories were then fleshed out with other data specific to the category. Eventually I wrote a description of each teacher. I realize it was my interpretation. I was responsible for the first level of interpretation; that which was observed and heard. I also decided what was included in the next level of interpretation; the written case story. The cross case analysis involved looking at the themes drawn from the case studies of both of the teachers. This led me to conclusions related to the research and the research process.

Conclusions Related to the Research

The Questions

Situating this study within a Christian school setting, the purpose of this study was to explore how the vision of the school influenced the practice of the teacher, and to determine the relationship between the personal vision of the teacher and the collective vision of the school.

The Findings

The Influence of the School's Vision on the Teacher's Practice

This study, conducted in an independent Christian School, indicated that the vision of the school seemed to influence the practice of the teacher in at least three ways: by providing freedom to operate from their own core belief system or world view, by requiring an obligation or expectation to uphold the vision of the school, and by establishing an atmosphere where the teachers considered it a privilege to teach in a way which was congruent with their personal vision.

Freedom To Operate From Their Own World View.

There was a congruence between the vision of the school and the practice of the teachers in the commonality of their core beliefs. This was a world view based on the Biblical understanding of Creation, Sin and Redemption, the component parts of the history of salvation as recorded in the Bible. Because the school's vision so clearly stated that the educational practice of the school was to be based in the Word of God, the teachers were free to openly adhere to that belief and teach the children from that perspective. This gave them a sense of empowerment, freeing them to teach with authenticity and integrity.

Considering that the vision statement referred to God as the Creator and Sustainer of the world, the teachers were free to give expression to this in their classrooms and in the school. They acknowledged God as the Creator and viewed the creation as the content of the curriculum. They looked to the Bible as the starting point for their thematic unit studies and built their teaching on a Biblical perspective. They were free to talk about Jesus as the Savior and Lord and could lead the class in prayer, singing, and other activities which allowed them and the students to express their own response to God. They recognized that this is an imperfect world, filled with imperfect people who live in broken relationships, but who also could experience forgiveness and renewal because of Jesus' victory over sin. Because of this world view the teachers lived in hope. They had a basis for redirecting the students and a goal toward which the students could be pointed. The teachers recognized their own imperfections as well, realizing that although they tried to plan carefully, there were times when their plans went awry. Upon reflection, they saw how they could have planned more carefully or spent more time in anticipating how the children would react to situations. There were times, when in the hope of meeting an objective such as being focused or productive, a child's emotions may have been hurt because the child may not have been treated in the most loving manner. The teachers knew there was forgiveness for them as well as for the students. They knew they would make mistakes, but recognizing their own brokenness, continued in their task of serving the students.

Because of the vision of the school, the teachers knew that they could tell the children they were special and unique, and could treat them as such. That was inherent in the idea of children being image-bearers of God. They knew they could respect the child and encourage the other children to do likewise because they had a reason for doing so. The idea of living in community and caring for one another's needs is a Biblical concept, so they knew that they could structure their classes in ways that the students talked and worked together, rather than by themselves. They knew that cooperation, rather than competition was a goal for which they could strive. This knowing came from the heart of the teachers; from the center of their beings and the world view they shared with that articulated in the school's vision.

Because there appeared to be a congruence between the basic components (Creation, Fall, Redemption, Image of God, and Community) of the vision of the school, and that of the teachers' personal vision, the teachers were free to operate from their own world view. Had there not been this congruence, the teachers may have faced a dilemma as teachers chosing to live a "cover story"(Clandinin & Connelly, 1995).

An Obligation to Uphold the Vision of the School.

Based on this study it appeared that the practice of both of the teachers emanated from their Christian world view. Both teachers indicated that they, with the parents, were to educate the children and that they and the parents shared the same goals. Their practice gave evidence that they loved "God above all and their neighbor as themselves". Their love was shown in the way they praised God, respected each child, accommodated the students' gifts and used their own professional skills to bring out the best in the students. This was done as their response to God within a communal setting.

Joy's strong sense of having to do her best came because she felt that God did not want anything that was mediocre. She felt a responsibility to instill within the children a Biblical sense of wisdom; to act rightly in conformity to God's will. Carol's deep sense of responsibility was evident as she spoke of being a representative of Christ and a leader. She expressed a need to be exemplary in her teaching practice. Just as with the children, each saw themselves as blessed with special gifts, gifts differing from those of their colleagues, but each responsible for the use of these gifts in service to God and others.

Britzman (1991) indicates that a discourse becomes powerful when it is institutionally sanctioned (p. 17). In this situation, the teachers were in relationship to the "what and how" of the vision statement and "in relation to the community that [made] particular practices possible and others unavailable" (p. 17). The mission statement of the school was powerful because it was institutionally sanctioned. It was approved by the society, and as indicated by the revision dates, periodically reviewed. At the time of this research it was again being reviewed. The parents, as part of the school community, had input in the revisions and because of their involvement in the school and classroom activities, were aware of the implementation of the statement, or lack thereof.

According to Clandinin and Connelly (1995), materials which enter the teachers' professional knowledge landscape via the "conduit" are not value-free, but come with "a moral push with which teachers are expected to do something" (p. 11). The school's mission statement was laden with value and the teachers were expected to consent to the mission statement as part of their contractual agreement. This did not appear to present a problem for either of the teachers. They were both aware that they, along with the parents, were educating the children. As Connelly and Clandinin (1999) found there are some teachers who can not live with the requirements of the out-of classroom place, therefore live a "cover story", but for others there is nothing that suggests a conflict between "the conduit-prescribed curriculum" and the teacher's identity (p. 93).

A Privilege to Teach Where There is Congruence of Vision and Practice.

Having chosen to teach in this particular type of school, both teachers were thankful for this opportunity. Carol was thankful that she could teach giving expression to herself as a person; teaching from the heart. This was possible because she held a Christian world view similar to that of the school. The Bible (2 Cor. 8: 14) calls it a privilege to share in "service to the saints", and John Calvin speaks of one's calling, whatever it may be, as having "splendour and value in the eye of God" (n. d., p. 379).

Carol indicated she would find it difficult if she were to teach in a situation where she would not be able to give expression openly and freely to her core values. "Work," says Greene, "is valuable to the Christian because the stewardly exploration and management of the creation leads to growth in the likeness of God. It is thus a form of praise and worship of the highest order"(1998, p. 55).

Joy was aware that she had many gifts to offer to Christian Education. She indicated that teaching was "her whole being" and her joy as a Christian was so evident. That was the reason I gave her the pseudonym, Joy. Her whole demeanor was one of enjoyment of the gifts of each day. As Imbach says:

> The fragrant generosity of sacrificial love can only emerge from the Source of love - God. We are given our place. We are assured of our dignity. From that place we can afford to risk offering ourselves to the world .... When we discover that we've been gifted, we are enabled to give. All that we are and have comes from the flowing of love, and we become partners in the flow. (1998, p. 256)

Joy's selfless giving appeared to be an expression of her love for God and for others. She was confident in herself and encouraged her students to be confident in themselves as well.

The Relationship Between The Personal Vision And The Collective Vision Of The School

A Shared World View.

Although the teachers did not verbally articulate the mission statement of the school, it was apparent from their practice that there was a relationship between their personal vision and the collective vision of the school. The key component was the Christian world view or biblical basis and their relationship to this view. World views are deeply engrained and are usually held below the level of consciousness (Greene, 1998, p. 30). The world view of the teachers affected not only what they taught but also how they taught. Both adhered to the Biblical story of Creation, Sin and Redemption. Both saw God as the Creator and Sustainer of the world. Both saw the creation as the substance of the curriculum. The basis of their teaching, which included their belief that children were special image bearers of God, had an affect on how they treated the children and provided for their learning needs. The fact that they saw themselves and their students as forgiven sinners gave them and their students hope for the future.

Unique Expressions of the Vision.

> Each person responds in her own way to that institutional setting with dramatically different consequences for the place each occupies on the landscape and for how she views the relationship of the out-of-classroom place. Each person creates a special place and orientation that is given by her story to live by and that may be said to constitute her professional identity. (Connelly & Clandinin, 1999, p. 93)

There were some similarities in the personal visions of the two teachers in this study, but as stated above, each responded in their own way. As stated earlier, each teacher made a conscious identification with a particular interpretation of the Christian message in the Reformed tradition. Within this common identification there were differences.

Joy, in acknowledging God as her starting point, seemed to make a conscientious intentional effort to integrate the Biblical perspective in her teaching. Often she integrated her Language arts and Bible, teaching or reinforcing a Language Arts skill as she used the content of Bible. Joy took into consideration the students' level of development as she encouraged them to be discerning and to respond with Biblical wisdom. She purposely created curriculum situations or asked questions about relational issues so that students had to think in terms of responding as a follower of Christ. These questions were pertinent not only to the classroom situation but also to the community or world.

Service to others was an expression of caring within Joy's classroom. Noddings (1988) describes a caring classroom as one where "students are encouraged to support each other; opportunities for peer interaction are provided, and the quality of that interaction is as important (to both teacher and students) as academic outcomes" (p. 223). Joy's classroom was dedicated to caring. Noddings (1991) also indicated that teachers who care for their students may differ in their expressions of caring, and sometimes that which is done in the name of caring may not be perceived to be so by the student. Over time a caring relationship develops in which trust is built. That was evident in Joy's relationship with her students. Her "obligation" to do her BEST seemed to compel her. She wanted both herself and her students to achieve the most they could. Sometimes she was so task oriented that students had to move quickly to keep up with the pace. A curtness was apparent then as she redirected them if they were tending to go off track. A softness, however, came over her as she spoke of the reciprocal loving relationship she had with two boys; a love which allowed them "to talk in this way". Although she told the boys their actions were inappropriate, their reaction indicated their hearts had been reached.

Some of the differences in expression of the vision of the school came about because the teachers were teaching students at different age levels and therefore what might be age appropriate for one grade may not have been for the other grade level. As an example, the grade five students could serve others, including others in the school and community, in different ways than the grade one students.

Carol conscientiously considered the students' developmental levels in the introduction of prayer and how, and to what extent, she expected students to show their response to God. She provided opportunities for the students to respond in their own ways. Carol's primary approach to teaching Language Arts was through the use of Children's Literature. According to Stephens and Watson (1994), reading literature in this context is "framed by the ideologies of the teacher and the text" (p. 1). On occasion, aspects of the shared Christian world view were integrated in the content and discussion as was noted in Chapter V. Carol did not try to force the integration thereby compromising authenticity. What she said was part of the natural flow of the discussion on the story. Some of it was a response to a remark or question of a student.

Carol showed respect for the children and modeled appropriate behavior for them, redirecting them when she felt it was necessary. She aimed to build a trusting, non competitive classroom environment. The physical arrangement of the classroom was conducive to this as were many of the teaching strategies she used. She helped the students gain an understanding of serving, by serving one another within their own classroom.

In spite of the fact that she tried to be well planned, the anticipated outcome did not always happen. During my time of observation two lessons were less than successful because all factors were not considered in preparation for the lesson. Her reaction showed her immediate frustration with the situation and upon reflection, she was able to sort through where she could have done things differently. Although at the time, she reacted to the students' behavior, she acknowledged her part in the situations.

Each recognized her own gift of teaching and also acknowledged the gifts of other teachers. This shows an agreement with the part of the mission statement which implies that teachers are "caretakers", using their skill to unfold the creation. The mission statement reads:

> As God's creatures we are made in His image to represent Him on earth and live in loving communion with Him. By sovereign appointment we are caretakers: loving our neighbour, tending the creation, and meeting our needs. God uses our skills in the unfolding and well-being of His world. (Appendix B)

Joy and Carol worked with, and learned from, fellow teachers in cross grade learning situations. They indicated that students would gain from having teachers with different gifts and passions and therefore felt free to concentrate on their own areas of strength. Again, their sense of community was evident as they depended on their colleagues to do their part in fulfilling the school's vision.

Personal Reflections of the Researcher

Personal critical reflection uncovers my own wisdom and interests, my biographical knowledge and influences, and imagines new possibilities

> for me....Together, personal and social reflection can be described metaphorically as becoming aware of one's "story" and "vision". (Groome, 1998, p. 436)

As part of my reflection on my research journey I re-read what I had written. It brought back a number of images, and caused others to emerge. It allowed me to dream of what might be. As I began the research process I entertained a question which had been part of my colleagues' and my experience for some time, "What does it mean to live out our vision of Christian Education?". It related to Proverbs 29:18 (King James Version) which says that God's people perish through lack of vision. The Biblical meaning of vision is Divine instruction (Santa, 1978, Wilson, n. d.) and relates to the Biblical story of Creation, Fall and Redemption as outlined in the basis of many of the schools which belong to Christian Schools International. This Biblical world view colors the way teachers in these schools see life and therefore the way they, as educators, teach. Edlin (1994), in reflecting on Proverbs 29:18 challenges Christian educators by saying, "we must have a clear concept of what we are involved in and where we are heading. We must realize the radical distinctiveness of our educational goal of challenging children to celebrate the Lordship of Christ over all of creation" (p. 74). As Greene (1998) so clearly warns, the view endorsed by the Enlightenment idea "that ordinary things can adequately be understood without reference to God does not seem as yet to be a problem to the church and its members" (p. XII). Some Christians focus mainly on the need for the salvation of one's soul and may "even pride themselves in their anti-intellectualism" (Greene, p. 77). As Christian educators who understand the Bible from a reformed interpretation, the understanding goes beyond sin and salvation. As Kuyper said, "There is not a square inch that does not belong to God". All created realities are full of meaning; nothing is value-free. The Christians task is to discover the intricacies of the Creation, acknowledge God as Creator, and in love and thankfulness return it to Him. God is still at work in the world and as co-workers - as followers of Christ, Christians can join with others who with discernment can care for the world, looking forward to a time when all things will be made new (Col. 1: 15 - 20).

Examining the historical roots of the Christian School movement gave me a greater insight into the rich heritage of these Christian schools, the reason for their distinctiveness, and the tenacity of Christian school supporters to maintain their vision.

Prior to engaging in this research, my plan had been to work with a staff from a Christian school using the collaborative action research approach. That would allow teachers to examine their practice and ask critical questions. I did not want to engage in research where I, as a researcher, would presumably benefit more than those with whom I worked. I did not want to engage in a process where the teacher became the object from which I could learn. My aim was a more collaborative approach. Although I became a participant observer in the classrooms in which I conducted the research, and although the interviews with the teachers allowed for meaningful conversation, time and distance did not permit a continuance of the collaborative approach I had anticipated. I wondered if the teachers' understanding of their practice changed because of this experience. Had they gained a greater understanding of who they were as Christian teachers? I trust they did as they verbally reflected on their practice.

I reflected on how my identity as a teacher and a researcher had been shaped by my commitment to this particular understanding of Christian education. Like the teachers in this study, the basis for my identity is the same as the basis of the education at this Christian school: the Biblical story of Creation, Fall and Redemption. My belief is that God created the world and continues to care for this world. Although the world was created good, sin entered the world. Through Jesus Christ we are redeemed and all things are being restored. Although the world remains troubled and flawed, the work and victory of Christ promises ultimate renewal when Christ comes again. Salvation and Spirituality do not remove us from life, they restore it (Cooper, 2002, p. 4).

As Christians in the Reformed tradition, we believe we have been given a communal task, which is to take care of the earth - being busy with the ordinary things of life. We do so with an understanding of ourselves as we are in relationship to God, to others and to the creation. Having been made in God's image, we have the ability to respond to Him, using the gifts and talents God has given us. I realize that all I have been given is a gift from God. Although I do so in imperfection, I strive to understand my relationship to God, others and creation to the best of my capabilities. I choose to lovingly discover what there is to learn in and through each of these aspects. "Ordinary, everyday life with God is full of inspiring surprises and exciting possibilities of creativity, growth, and excellence" (Cooper, 2002, p. 4).

Once the data was collected, the project which I thought was going to become a solo effort, led me into relationships with authors and new understandings from and through the literature. Some authors were familiar and some were first time acquaintances. We come to know in relationship to the "other". As Palmer says, "Knowing is how we make community with the unavailable other, with realities that would elude us without the connective tissue of knowledge. Knowing is the human way to seek relationship and, in the process, to have encounters and exchanges that will inevitably alter us (1998, p. 54)."The things of the world call to us, and we are drawn to them- each of us to different things, as each is drawn to different friends" (Palmer, 1998, p. 105). That dynamic process of knowing was one that continually spurred me forward.

I learned from this experience and through these relationships. I believe each experience changes us to some degree. I trust this research experience will leave an impact on me as an educator. I believe I will be more conscientious in the day to day practice of my teaching , realizing that my Reformed world view has shaped my identity as a teacher and affects my practice. I will continue to stand in awe of the Creator and the Creation, thankful for the gifts I have been given. These gifts include the pedagogical insights necessary to create learning opportunities which will allow both my students and me to respond to God. I will continue to give God the glory because of His continual renewal in my life and in the lives of those whom I teach.

I agree with Palmer (1998) who suggests that if we want to grow in our practice as educators, we have two primary places to go: to the inner ground from which good teaching comes and from the community of fellow teachers from whom we can learn more about ourselves and our craft (p. 141).

Good teaching comes from the identity and integrity of the teacher; the connectedness held in the heart which is the place where intellect, emotion, spirit and will converge in the human self" (Palmer, 1998, p. 11). The heart of our being is the place from which our world view emanates. Groome (1998) reminds us that, in the tradition of Christian education it is believed that "ultimately, to educate is God's work" and "God's Holy Spirit - not the human agent - is the primary educator" (p. 443). It is because we are sought and known and loved by spiritual grace, says Palmer (1983/1993), that we are capable of seeking and knowing and loving. I am not alone in my teaching/learning endeavor. God is working in and through me to be the "best" teacher that I can be. Working out of love which flows through me, I trust that I will act as a model of caring which Noddings (1996) indicates, exhibits "a host of other desirable qualities" (p. 391) so necessary in teaching. I will have to continue to take the time for reflection and meditation in order to stay in touch with "the voice of the teacher within" (Palmer, 1998, p. 31).

The second place which allows us to grow in our practice is the community of fellow teachers. As we tell our stories, or as our stories emerge from within us, we come to grips with the essence of who we really are. Our honest story will be made up of our most fundamental convictions or beliefs; "beliefs about what the world is like, about who we are, about what things are most important.... A conviction is something we cannot help believing because, if we did not believe it, we would not be ourselves anymore" (Dykstra, 1981, p. 52). As I reread one of my papers - stories of my teaching experience, written for a university course, I realized the importance of the reader's comments. The comments sometimes were an affirmation, sometimes made me question myself and sometimes changed my perspective. Connelly and Clandinin's comments on the teachers' stories in *Shaping a Professional Identity* also enlarge the reader's understanding of these particular stories. As we tell our stories and listen to one another, we may come to a better understanding as to who we are as teachers. As a consultant or teacher of pre-service or in-service teachers, I will commit to using teachers' own stories to help them come to a greater understanding of who they are as a teachers and who and what directs their practice. As this study shows, a teacher's practice indicates his or her core beliefs or world view. In order to do this effectively I will have to learn more about the critique of narrative as well.

Far too often teachers and administrators initiate social activities to promote a sense of togetherness. More important is the promotion of a sense of collegiality. Groups of teachers could formulate questions about the relationship between their teaching and the school's vision which may help them understand their school's vision or mission more clearly. In attempting to answer their own questions, teachers may come to a greater understanding of the implications of the school's vision on their teaching practice. As a classroom teacher I will seek to honestly and openly engage in dialogue with other teachers in order to improve my practice.

Dialogue and relationships are crucial to good teaching. Several times in the past I have taught a "Christian Perspective" course to teachers who were beginning to teach in CSI Christian schools or to those who had experience teaching in these schools. Should I be called on to do this again, I will do my best to respect both the personal relationships and the relationships with the subject matter. Teachers at various stages of their careers value professional development in different ways. Being sensitive to this variance, careful thought will be needed in preparation of activities which will accommodate the diverse professional needs. Just as in Joy's and Carol's classroom, I as the teacher, will need wisdom and discernment to meet the needs of the "students". Greene (1998) indicates that "when an underlying worldview is brought up into the daylight of consciousness and worked out logically into a set of concepts, the result is a philosophy" (p. 66). Some teachers shy away from the topic of "philosophy". Since a Christian world view and a Christian philosophy of education are considered important in Christian schools, practical ways will have to be found to embrace these concepts which also honor the teachers' identity. Developing a relationship with the "students" and gaining some understanding of their relationship with the subject matter will help to provide meaningful learning experiences.

Suggestions For Future Research

This research was conducted in a school where one could anticipate considerable commonality between the school's vision and that of the teacher. It may be interesting to research similar questions in one or more public school settings where teachers are not brought together by a shared Christian world view. What would be the influence of the mission statement on the practice and what would be the relationship between the teacher's personal vision and the collective vision in a different school community?

There are schools which claim to share a unified collective vision such as alternative schools (within or outside the public system), charter schools, Waldorf schools or Montessori schools. The research questions could also be explored in these settings where the mission statement is being developed or where the mission statement has already been developed and the school has been in operation for a few years.

Many schools have gone through the process of setting a vision and articulating a mission statement. Collaborative action research by the teaching staff may help deal with the implementation of the mission statement and how it affects the classroom practice. By validating teachers' experiences, collaborative action research helps teachers come to a greater understanding of themselves and their teaching practice, as they reflect on their practice and critically question their actions.

Research (Lashway, 1995; Sergiovanni, 1990; Wallace, Engel & Mooney, 1997) indicates that the principal is a key person in the implementation of the vision of the school. Further research might examine what initiatives the principal has put in place to ensure that the vision of the school is more than a statement and how the mission statement influences the work of the principal.

Britzman indicates that "any theory of power must be sensitive to the capacity of persons to interpret and intervene in their world" and allows us to raise the question "What enables or constrains particular forms of practices and the discourses that legitimate or challenge them" (1991, p. 19)? A study could also be done to examine if there are limiting effects on schools, teachers, principals, students and the school community, caused by a unity of vision.

There may be some schools which operate without any evident mission statement or stated world view. A study in this type of setting may reveal what prompts school administration, teachers and community to make their decisions.

This study was conducted in one school to study the effects of the mission statement of the school on the practice of the teachers. There are school districts which have mission statements. A study of the impact of the district's mission statement on one or more schools could be conducted or a study could be conducted to determine the impact of the district's mission statement on the practice of a number of teachers within the district.

Recently a number of Christian schools have become part of the public school jurisdiction. One could examine what is being done to ensure that the vision of the school continues; not just at the administrative level, but also within the classroom.

As explained earlier in the research, there are a number of Christian schools which include within their constitution belief statements similar to those of the school studied. Further research might be conducted at these schools to find out how their particular mission statement comes to expression in the life of the classroom.

This research was conducted in two classrooms of differing grade levels at one school. Service was one of the aspects of the mission statement. The practical expression of service appeared to vary with the grade level. Future research, conducted at the same grade levels, but at different schools which hold similar mission statements, might reveal how teachers and students, within the Christian School, practically live out the service aspect of their mission statement.

The mission statement of this school emphasized Christian Education for service. Various educators have stressed Christian education for "responsive discipleship", for "responsible action", for "commitment", for "freedom," and for "witness to and witness for..." (Goheen, 2001). Further research could focus on the particular purpose of Christian education and the relationship between the purpose and outcome of that purpose within the Christian school setting.

Implications From the Research

Teachers experienced freedom and confidence to teach from their own world view when they knew that their vision was similar to that of the school. It is necessary for schools to clearly articulate their vision whether it is done by the board, the administration, the teachers, the parents or a combination of some or all of those associated with the school. Those associated with the school must seek to effectively articulate a compelling vision for the school via a number of different routes (Barth, 2001).

The articulated vision of the school must be conveyed to the community and the staff so that there is an awareness of the school's purpose. Frequently having the staff revisit the school's vision, implies the importance of its impact on school policies, the daily decisions and the teaching practices of the school. Those in leadership may have to examine what procedures are in place or need to be put in place in order to do so.

The staff may consider examining their vision or mission statement sentence by sentence or word by word to clarify how the statement has an impact on their teaching. This may help them cull out those parts which are just "words", or rearticulate other parts which will help the school hold itself accountable to what is in the statement.

This research indicated that although the teachers did not verbally articulate their vision of teaching, each teacher's practice indicated that she shared the world view of the school and articulated it in her practice. Barth (2001) indicates that "a precondition for constructing an authentic, collective vision is that every school educator must come to grips with his or her own personal vision" (p. 204). He, along with Clandinin and Connelly(1995), encourage teachers to tell their own stories to acknowledge and validate their educational practice, thus building communities of learning. Sharing in these communities of learning gives opportunities to enhance the professionalism of teachers and helps teachers understand their own practice of teaching (Beattie, 1995; Fink and Resnick , 2001; Palmer, 1998; Stronks & Blomberg, 1993). Schools may have to examine how this is currently being done or what needs to be implemented in their professional development programs to encourage a community of learners. "Guiding statements should be seen as catalysts for deep reflection about beliefs and practices - not as vague reminders to do the right thing" (Allan, 2001, p. 292).

Beattie (1995) believes that in deciding to live as professional teachers, we have created situations where the necessity for continuous learning and professional growth and the telling and retelling of our stories is fundamental to our professionalism. Often, talk about the practice of teaching occurs outside planned professional development programs. Creating a spirit of trust and collegiality can allow this talk to happen within the planned professional development programs. Talk about exemplary teaching is unlikely to happen if those in leadership do not expect and invite it into being. Professional development opportunities within an environment of trust will have to be nurtured. It means those in leadership need to look "behind the masks teachers sometime wear and see in teachers more than what they sometimes see in themselves"(Palmer, 1998, p. 158). Encouraging and affirming teachers in their efforts to practice the school's mission statement, may encourage teachers to share what they are doing in their classrooms. A teacher who is affirmed by his or her principal and invited to share with the staff, is more likely to do so than is one who does not know if his or her "risking" has met the principal's approval.

By reflecting on their own teaching in response to the interview questions, the two teachers involved in this research came to a greater understanding of what they did in their own classrooms and in the school in general. Those in school leadership, or those given the task of leadership, can intentionally build a bond of trust, just as the teachers in this research did in their own classroom (Barth, 2001). In such an environment teachers may feel free to share their gifts of teaching. Then teachers may also be willing to risk sharing what they are doing and embark on new ways of implementing the school's vision.

Educational institutions expect teachers to be involved in discussions about their teaching practice, but leaders must not only be involved in the craft of teaching and learning, but also provide opportunities for building strong interpersonal relationships where trust and respect are paramount (Barth, 1990; Barth. 2001; Fink and Resnick, 2001; Palmer, 1998). When leaders are involved with teachers in their practice, and can talk about their practice, they will likely be able to stimulate discussion about the impact of the vision of the school on the practice in the classroom.

Teachers planning together, team teaching units or having opportunity to observe one another are ways in which teachers can see how their colleagues practically allow the school's vision to direct their practice. If the school values this kind of learning together, time must be allocated during the school day so that teachers are not expected to do this enhancement on their own time.

If schools value their vision and the practice which flows from their vision, they would do well to celebrate that vision and let others clearly see that it is a vision in which they believe. The language of the vision statement should become part of the principal's conversation in explaining school policies and practice, writing newsletter articles or advising in board or staff decisions. The meaningful sprinkling of "vision language" in dialogue between teachers and parents, teachers and colleagues, and teachers and students will keep the vision of the school alive.

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Appendix A
Mission Statement
from
Policy Handbook

EMMAUS SOCIETY FOR CHRISITAN EDUCATION

SUBJECT: MISSION STATEMENT

Section: Administration

The aim of the Emmaus Society for Christian Education is to provide schooling shaped by the Christian faith as interpreted by the Reformed understanding of scripture which testifies that Christ is Lord of all.

1. BASIS

1.1 Creation

In the beginning of time God called the world into being and gave it shape and order. Our world belongs to God. God is revealed in creation.

1.2 Bible

God has revealed himself in Jesus Christ and in the Bible. As the record and tool of God's redeeming work the Bible's infallible teaching are foundational to Christian Education.

1.3 Sin and Redemption

All of creation, including humankind, has fallen under the curse of sin but is continually being redeemed through Jesus Christ. The creation still belongs to God who upholds it. God's people are born again and restored to fellowship with Him in a life of thanksgiving and service.

2. RESPONSIBILITIES

2.1 Parents

Educating children is the primary task of parents who are called to nurture them in the knowledge of the Lord. The school receives its authority from the home.

2.2 Students

The task of the school is to develop the students' knowledge and understanding of their relationship to God, themselves, others, and the world around them:

- to provide a healthy and joyful learning atmosphere
- to create opportunities for action and service
- to develop the unique skills and talents of the individual students.

2.3 Staff

The staff consists of men and women who conform to appropriate academic and moral standards. They exemplify the love of Christ, thereby developing a positive learning environment.

2.4 Community

The supporting community shares its gifts of knowledge, wisdom, time and resources with the school community.

3. ELEMENTS OF EDUCATION

3.1 Curriculum

Faith and learning are integrated into one world and life view. We desire to serve and honor God and our neighbour in all of life's activities.

3.2 Methodology

Children are created in the image of God and deserve respect. Students are called to a life of responsible discipleship.

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Appendix B

Explaining The Schools

from

Policy Handbook

Emmaus Society For Christian Education

SUBJECT: EXPLAINING THE SCHOOLS

SECTION: ADMINISTRATION

1. MISSION STATEMENT

The Emmaus Christian Schools aim to provide an education that is Christian: that is, shaped by the Christian faith. This Christian faith develops from an understanding of Scripture as reflected in the Reformed heritage. This faith finds its broadest expression in the entire program of instruction. Students are encouraged to develop value judgments which are grounded in the knowledge of our relationship to God, our understanding of ourselves, the knowledge of our relationship to others, our relationship to the world, and the acknowledgment of the Lordship of Christ over all.

In this setting our schools seek to promote sound scholarship and pedagogy, earnest effort, and an obligation to use our talents fully in response to our divine calling to faith. Faithfulness demands a life of action and involvement, and seeks personal piety, integrity, and social responsibility. It recognizes that service to God, others, and ourselves is possible and necessary in all activities, professions, and walks of life. It asserts that the life of Christian service must be lived now. Accordingly our schools provide opportunities for students to experience and apply their learning to Christian action and service. The aim of our schools is to prepare students to live responsive and productive lives of faith to the glory of God in contemporary society -- not merely lives that have a place for religion, or lives which formally relate religious commitment to academic disciples, but lives which in every part, in every manifestation, in their very essence, are Christian.

2. THE FOUNDATION OF CHRISTIAN EDUCATION:

God has made Himself known in creation and specifically in Jesus Christ and in the holy scriptures. The Bible, as the record and tool of His redeeming work, is in its entirety God's infallible revelation, the teachings of which are foundational to the uniqueness of a Christian education.

We therefore affirm that:

2.1 In the beginning God -- Father, Son and Spirit -- who is one, called this world into being and gave it shape and order. The Father reveals His love in His Son, fully God yet our true human model, who gives us access to the Father in faith, fellowship with one another in love, and freedom to live in the world with hope. The Holy Spirit is always at work in creation and in history seeking to draw all people toward the fullness of truth and love which is in Christ Jesus.

2.2 The Bible is the basis of knowledge in all matters of faith and practice and teaches that God is Creator of heaven and earth and furthermore, upholds and directs all things according to His will and power. The faithfulness of our great Provider gives sense to our days and hope to our years. The future is secure for our world belongs to God. The best explanation of the purpose of creation, the meaning of history, the role of governments and culture, and the benefit of creative literature, music and art is found in this biblical world view.

2.3 As God's creatures we are made in His image to represent and reflect Him on the earth and live in loving communion with Him. By sovereign appointment we are caretakers: loving our neighbour, tending the creation, and meeting our needs. God uses our skills in the unfolding and well-being of His world.

2,4 All spheres of life -- marriage, family, school and society: work and worship, play and art -- now bear the influence of our rebellion. Like our first parents, we have become victims of our own sin. While justly angry, God yet turned His face in love to a world bent on destruction. He remembered His covenanting promise to reconcile the world to Himself. He has come among us in Jesus Christ. With patience and tender care He set out on the long road of redemption to reclaim the lost as His people and the world as His kingdom. Our world, troubled and flawed, still belongs to God. He holds it together and gives us hope.

2.5 Jesus is the only source of salvation for us. It is only through His redemptive work on the cross that we are born again and restored to fellowship with God. As covenant partners, called to faithful obedience and set free for joyful praise, we offer our hearts and lives to do God's work in His world.

2.6 Through the reconciling work of Jesus Christ we find our new place in the world. When the Holy Spirit establishes His rule in our hearts, then His kingdom of love and light is exposed in every area of life. The task of God's people is to make disciples of all nations and be developers of culture, reconcilers within society, and caretakers of nations, prophetic truth-tellers and truth-doers, priestly healers of people and creation, kingly administrators of God's world.

3. THE PLACE OF CHRISTIAN EDUCATION:

God calls parents supported by the Christian community to nurture children in harmony with His revelation. Christian schools, complementing the roles of the home and church, endeavour to provide an environment for the nurture of our children in the understanding of God's creation - a world to live in. This environment must reveal the providence and wonderful works and grace of God, and it must foster a faithful, loving obedient way of living before God.

We therefore maintain that:

3.1 The primary responsibility for educating our children belongs to parents: it is a God-given task (Deuteronomy 6: 4-9). Surrounded by love and care in their daily welfare, our children should learn by Christian example the value of a disciplined life in our homes. In marriage and family we serve God by reflecting His covenant love in life-long loyalty, by teaching His ways, so that children may know Jesus as Lord and learn to use their gifts in a life of joyful service. Our children need to be aware of God's call to faithfulness and their need to respond to the command to love God, their neighbour, and creation.

3.2 Our school is an extension of the home and, thereafter, of the parental responsibility to "train up a child in the way he should go" (Proverbs 22:6a). The school is to strive to place God and His infallible Word at the center of all instruction and policies developed. Instruction is given in all subjects needed to prepare our children for participation in society: the church, the work force, the economy, and the state. We believe that the teaching in the Christian school must at all times be characterized by a positive faith in subjection to God's Word, a genuine love for God, humanity and creation, a sincere appreciation of the believer's mandate and an appropriate rebuttal of all modern scepticism and unbelief against the truths of God's Word.

3.3 Our children have been created in the image of God, capable of learning and obeying the truth of God's Word and His creation. Although sin has diminished that ability, we believe that in Christ is all the wisdom, knowledge and love necessary to restore them as God's imagers, worthy of respect. As forgiven and forgiving imagers of God, students - like and with their teachers - have inherent responsibility: love experienced becomes the basis for love demonstrated. Embodiment of faith requires imitation. The wisdom of the ages tell us that children and young people are influenced by observing those around them.

3.4 The participation of the Christian community in the establishment and maintenance of Christian schools is foundational. We believe that God's covenantal promise embraces parents and the entire Christian community. The Christian school community seeks to share our gifts - knowledge and wisdom, support and encouragement, time and resources - readily and cheerfully to the advantage of others, especially to the family of God. The Christian school encourages students to model this kind of sharing.

4. THE CHRISTIAN SCHOOL

God has given us the capacity to learn, through observation, experience and instruction in a lifelong enterprise.

We believe God has entered into a covenant or promising relationship with His people; while God promises faithfulness, believing parents are obliged to educate their children in the fear of the Lord. As children grow older, parents draw from educators valuable skills to assist them in the process of change and growth necessary in their children's lives. Christian schools serve as a training ground for children, who, by the grace of God, have a share in influencing the culture and society in which they live. We believe that the Christian school educates children for a life of obedience to God. Obedience is stressed by integrating faith and learning, a calling to discipleship and developing students to the fullness of their ability.

We therefore propose that:

4.1 The entire program of instruction in our Christian schools should direct us in the knowledge of our relationship to God, others and the world, our understanding of ourselves, and to acknowledgment of the Lordship of Christ over all.

4.2 Students must be shown that Christians stand in the world as dissenters and as reformers, basing both word and deed on love for one's neighbour as oneself.

4.3 The Christian schools must enlist strongly dedicated teachers of appropriate academic and moral standards to join in the nurturing of our children. The teachers must at all times seek to reflect and represent by word and example the love of Christ and honor of God. Within the school's policies and guidelines, teachers have authority to deal with establishing a positive learning environment and to deal with breakdowns in that learning environment.

4.4 The curriculum and methodology used in our Christian schools must be based on the conviction that knowledge of the Bible and Jesus Christ is essential to the development and growth of the child. This belief calls for the integration of faith and learning. Each subject area, each activity, and the environment as a whole are seen as parts of the total truth of God in Christ.

By integrating life and studies with the Bible, the Christian school helps students develop a world-view in which a life of faith is not composed of religious activities alongside non-religious activities, but one in which God is gratefully served and honored in all activities. It is a life in which discipleship, self-denial, and cross-bearing are expressed in terms of the society we live in. It is a life of trust in the Lord in all circumstances, of joy in the Lord in all situations.

4.5 Each student must seek to fulfill his or her learning task to the best of his or her ability. And each student must respond freely to the command to love God, his or her neighbour, and creation. Students, in their development, are required to show ever-increasing responsibility and initiative.

4.6 Those responsible for the governance of our schools must develop, implement and review policies that embody the objectives of these educational principles. Every relationship with the Christian school community must give evidence of the life-promoting presence of the Holy Spirit. Such leadership must remain aware that it establishes and models the patterns of interaction reflecting Christ's example.

4.7 While remaining aware of the educational standards of the province of Alberta, we believe that our Christian schools should be free to function according to the above-mentioned principles.

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